

Men I Have Seen.

BY

PUNDIT SIVANATH SASTRI, M.A.

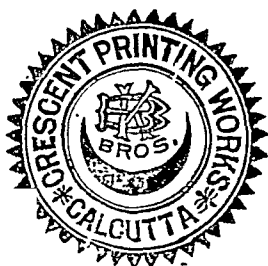
BEING THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF
Seven Great Bengalis.

MODERN REVIEW OFFICE,
210/3/1, Cornwallis Street,
CALCUTTA.



1919.

PUBLISHED BY
RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE, M.A.



*Printed by—*MVI. K. M. HILAL,
at the Crescent Printing Works,
58, Upper Circular Road,
CALCUTTA.

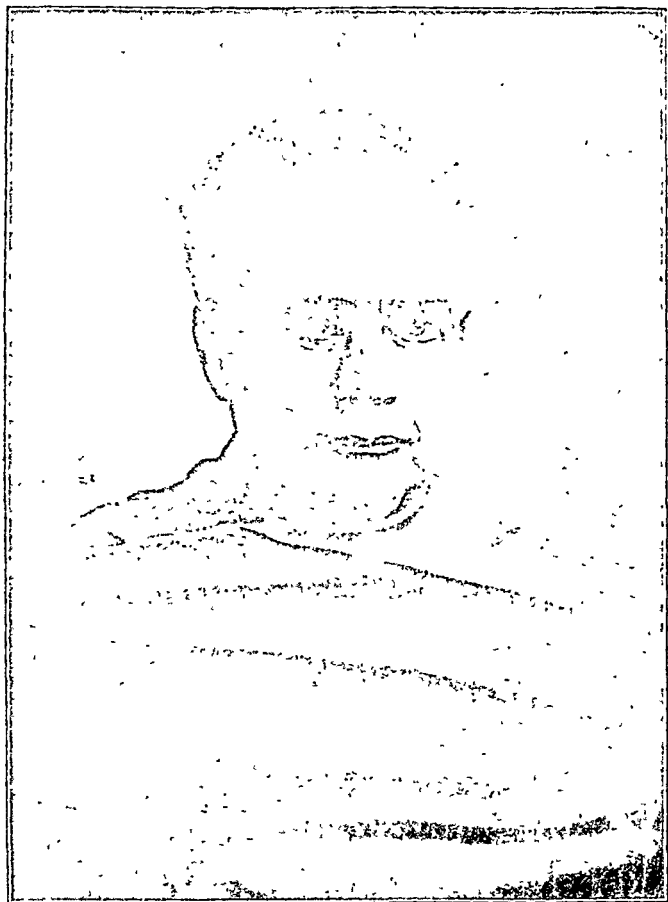
Publisher's Note.

As a foreward to the Reminiscences brought together in this book, the Author wrote as follows in *The Modern Review*, in which they originally appeared :—

“I have been requested by the editor of this journal to note down at my leisure moments the memorable things that linger in my memory about the remarkable personalities I have come across during the course of my life. Such notes, it is believed, will have a morally elevating influence on the conduct and character of the rising generation. Believing such a thing to be possible, I have agreed in spite of the infirmities of age and ill-health to comply with the request. I am going to write down the reminiscences of some of our great men. But in doing so it is not my intention to give anything like a complete or connected account of any life; for that I must leave the reader to other sources of information, confining myself only to such things as came under my personal observation and seemed to be characteristic of the men whom it was my pleasure and privilege to know.”

Ramananda Chatterjee.

Boys' School ...
No. 11531.
Boys' School ...



ISWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF PANDIT
ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR.

ONE of the first remarkable personalities I came in contact with was Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. It happened in this way. I was brought to Calcutta in June, 1856, by my father, who was then a teacher in the Government Bengali School in Calcutta. I was a boy of nine years then, and came to reside in the Calcutta residence of my maternal uncle, the late Pandit Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, subsequently the far-famed editor of the *Somaprakash*. It was something like a large lodging house where only men of different ages, some students and others otherwise employed, lived and messed together. I longed to see a female face and see the maternal smile, but alas! that pleasure was denied me, and I was left entirely in the company of men who by turns

cooked their own meals and washed their own plates. I was the youngest amongst them and was loved and petted by all. But their company for a young child like myself was highly injurious. Their talk was coarse and vulgar, and the way in which some of them lived was immoral. Some of them actually tried to teach me bad things. But fortunately I was soon admitted into the Calcutta Sanskrit College where Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was the Principal, to whom boys along with others began to look up as a hero and a great man.

In the College, on our admission, we came under the new Vidyasagar *regime*. A few years back Pandit Vidyasagar had introduced some great changes in the College regulations. First, he had thrown open the doors of the College to others than *the twice-born* castes—Brahmins and Vaidyas; secondly, he had altered the old mode of teaching, namely commencing with *Mugdhabodha*, the well-known Sanskrit grammar, and had introduced in its place the practice of commencing the education of beginners with his own Bengali Primers called *Bodhodaya*

and *Kathamala* and his introductory Sanskrit Grammar called *Upakramanika*; a system disliked by the old Pandits still attached to the College and sometimes openly criticised by them, thus giving us, the newcomers, an opportunity for discussion. Thirdly, he had introduced the system of payment instead of free education. Fourthly, he had commenced the practice of teaching English as a second language in the higher classes. I joined the College in the midst of these great changes and was partly influenced by the new ideas, which by means of constant discussion permeated the lowest classes. Then there was the wide-spread widow remarriage agitation, by which society in Bengal, and specially the Sanskrit College, was at that time being convulsed. Vidya-sagar's books on the subject, added to the passing of a Government measure sanctioning such marriages, ranged the educated community of the time on two sides, and the battle was being fought out even amongst the Sanskrit Pandits. The Sanskrit College naturally became an arena where that battle raged with the keenest interest, and even we young

children became participators in that struggle, some taking up Vidyasagar's side, others defending the ancient practice. I, for myself, from the beginning almost, became one of Vidyasagar's partisans and earnestly took up the cause of reform. One cause of this was that Pandit Vidyasagar was a class-fellow of my maternal uncle, Pandit Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, and a fellow-student and personal friend of my father, Pandit Harananda Vidyasagar. Twice or thrice a week he would call at our lodging to have a chat with my uncle and my father on his pet scheme, and as I was the youngest little creature in that lodging I attracted his notice and became an object of his affection. I became his pet, as it were. The first thing he would do after coming to our lodging was to seek me out, to pat me on the cheek, to make a pair of pincers of his two fingers and pinch my belly, which was rather protuberant, or to make to me little presents as marks of his pleasure. His repeated visits made our lodging a hot-bed of widow-remarriage agitation, and I imbibed its atmosphere from there. What I swallowed

at home I disgorged at the College and gave rise to heated discussions amongst my classmates.

Things went on like this when in the cold season of the year 1856 took place the first remarriage of a Hindu widow, celebrated in the house of Babu Rajkrishna Banerji situated in Sukeas Street, Calcutta. I shall never forget that day. They took me to witness the ceremony. When Vidyasagar Mahashay came with his friend, the bridegroom, at the head of a large procession, the crowd of spectators was so great that there was not an inch of moving space in the whole street, and many fell into the big drains which were to be seen by the sides of the Calcutta streets of those days. After the ceremony it became the subject of discussion everywhere; in the bazars and the shops, in the streets, in the public squares, in students' lodging-houses, in gentlemen's drawing rooms, in offices, and in distant village homes, where even women earnestly discussed it amongst themselves. The weavers of Santipore, issued a peculiar kind of women's *saris* which contained woven along its borders the first

line of a newly composed song, which went on to say "May Vidyasagar live long," etc. Thus was an agitation kicked up, the like of which has seldom been witnessed in this country.

Within a few months after this marriage there came the Indian Mutiny, and the quarrel of Vidyasagar with Mr. Gordon Young, the Director of Public Instruction, on account of which he resigned Government service and entered upon a new and hard struggle to maintain his position in life and to cope with the new responsibilities thrust upon him, by the widow-remarriage movement.

From this time for one or two years I lost personal touch with Pandit Vidyasagar. He became involved in struggles which made his visits to our lodging rare. From 1859 his visits again became frequent, because he was one of the projectors of the *Somaprakash*, my uncle's well-known paper. He would come to my uncle to hold personal conference with him and to spur him on in the new undertaking. But this also ceased within a short time, for my uncle soon be-

came the sole editor and proprietor of the paper, and after being once led into the work soon took it up in right earnest and threw into it his whole strength. The *Somaprakash* soon rose to be an epoch-making paper in Bengal. It changed the whole tone of Indian journalism.

From this time till 1868 I lived without any personal contact with the great Pandit, progressing in my college studies, and passing out of boyhood, living most of the time in the suburbs. Even during that period wherever I met the great Pandit, he manifested the same interest in me, and showed the same affection.

In the year 1868 one of my class-fellows, the late Pandit Yogendranath Vidyabhusan, lost his first wife, and sought my advice as to the course he should follow ; because his friends and relations began to press him for a second marriage. We two friends held consultation together and as the cause of the remarriage of Hindu widows was uppermost in our minds, we decided upon a widow-remarriage. A young Hindu widow was soon found out, and I approached

Pandit Vidyasagar, seeking his aid in getting up that match. The Pandit threw himself heart and soul into the affair, and materially helped us in going through the ceremony. He procured the Brahmin priest who was to preside at the ceremony; made material contributions towards feeding a pretty large number of guests; made valuable presents to the bride; and personally graced the ceremony with his presence. There was one little bit of incident in connection with that day's gathering which was characteristic of the great Pandit's habitual good humour. A friend of his, who was one of the guests, came there with his little daughter, a girl of nine or ten. This friend made his daughter bow at the feet of Pandit Vidyasagar, whereupon the latter blessed her with the following benediction:—"May you live long, my little daughter, may you be united to a suitable bridegroom, but then become a widow, and may I have the opportunity of getting you married again." This curious benediction naturally gave rise to general laughter; when the great Pandit also laughed heartily, and said, if the

daughters of his friends did not become widows how was he to carry out his pet idea ? It was so unpopular amongst his countrymen.

After this ceremony we, the promoters of the remarriage, were put to very severe persecution. My friend who had married the widow, was boycotted not only by his friends and relations but even by the ordinary class of Hindu servants. None would serve under them. At this extremity, finding my friend and his wife altogether deserted and solitary, I went to reside with them. When we were thus living together, Pandit Vidyasagar made it a rule to pay us visits almost every other day to cheer us up by his company. His visits were sources of great pleasure to us. He would tell us delightful little stories about his past experiences, and make funny observations about men and things which made us laugh heartily and in a manner forget all our trials and sufferings.

One day the Pandit came with quite another purpose. He came to carry on a wordy warfare with the brother of my friend's wife who was a co-lodger with us. Somebody had reported to Vidyasagar some

remarks of this young man about the Pandit himself. It was not in the nature of the Pandit to bear a private grudge, or to harbour anything in secret. He loved fair dealing and open-faced truth and always made it a point to clear up misunderstandings with those he loved by open dealing. He came that day to clear that matter up. It was about certain observations said to have been made by Vidyasagar himself which the latter did not remember, and considered extremely unlikely. My young friend, with whom the Pandit had come to clear up matters, desperately stuck to his first assertion and would not withdraw his remarks in spite of the Pandit's apparent displeasure. Vidyasagar, who was a fiery Brahmin all through, lost his temper, hurled his invectives against the young man, and left our lodging like an enraged lion. I entreated him to stop and go into the inner apartments and see my friend's wife, hoping her very sight would calm him down. But paying no heed to my request, he ran home, at the rate of ten minutes per mile. After he left us we found fault with the young

man for his ill manners when speaking to such a great man. The next morning we sent him to beg pardon of the Pandit. He went, and finding Vidyasagar absent from home, quietly sat waiting for him. When Pandit Vidyasagar returned, he was surprised to see the former sitting in his study, and said—"I doubt not you come to beg pardon. What a fool you must be not to allow me the gratification of cherishing an angry feeling even for two days? I flew from you in anger only yesterday, and you come this morning to beg pardon. Let my anger have a little time to cool, I am coming to yours in a day or two." So before the apology was actually offered the pardon was granted. When we heard this little story of reconciliation our merriment was great. We wondered to think what a genuinely good man was this great Bengali reformer.

There was another memorable incident which happened during this period of our intercourse. One day the Pandit called, and found a little girl of seven or eight seated on my lap; and calling me her *dada* or elder brother. He had never seen that girl in our

house. She was a neighbour's daughter, belonging to the barber caste. That little girl was a widow and we were trying to persuade her widowed mother to consent to her remarriage. Hence was our interest in her and she had by that time become partly naturalized in our house. She became a little companion to my friend's wife, and specially took to me as her kindred. She was a handsome little girl, not at all looking like a barber's daughter. When the Pandit saw her on my lap he was startled and asked me who she was. When apprised of her history and of her condition, he was greatly moved. The fact that that little girl was a widow roused up all his old emotions ; big tear drops began to trickle down his cheeks ; he took her on his lap, clasped her in his arms ; and said—she did not look like a barber's daughter ; and when leaving, ordered me to get her admitted into the Bethune School, himself agreeing to pay her fees, and to send her and her mother in a *palankin* to his house so that he could present them to his own mother.

The next day they were sent to his house

and when the mother and daughter returned we were all struck to hear of the warm reception they had received in the hands of Vidyasagar and his mother. The great Pandit turned up next day and held conference with me, about her education and her final remarriage. But alas ! before these plans could be carried out, my friend's wife fell ill and died. During her illness the Pandit made gigantic efforts to save her ; gave me a letter of introduction to one of the greatest physicians of the town, secured everything needful for treatment and attendance ; and repeated his visits morning and evening ; but alas, nothing could save her ; she expired within a week. It was the dreadful malady of cholera. Her death affected us terribly. My grief was very great, for I loved her truly and she also clung to me as a soothing companion, during a period of great persecution and suffering. But I had no time to look to my personal grief. I became taken up with the work of consolation of my friend, of her own brother who had suffered so much on her account, and of her mother also who sometime before that event

had come to dwell with us. When she hung on my neck in her agony, and made my bosom wet with her tears, one can easily fancy how difficult it became to cherish my own sorrow for the loss of a dearly loved friend and sister and now I had to drown my own sufferings in the sufferings of others. Vidyasagar Mahashay also fully shared our sorrows; he would come and weep with us and would try his best to help me in giving consolation to the bereaved family.

The first result of this sorrowful event was that our joint living was broken up. My friend went to live somewhere else, his mother-in-law and brother-in-law took to separate house-keeping, and I became soon involved in a new struggle. I publicly joined the Brahmo Samaj under Mr. Keshub Chandra Sen.

The second result was, we lost sight of the little barber girl, whose case in subsequent years turned out to be quite deplorable. That is perhaps the saddest part of the story.

The fact of my joining the Brahmo Samaj made the heart of Vidyasagar Mahashay

very sad, as I subsequently learned. But he gave expression to no displeasure in my presence; his sorrow being largely due to the love he bore to my parents whom he thought my conversion to Brahmoism would deeply pain. Otherwise, the Pandit was once the Secretary of the *Tatwabodhini Sabha* of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, and was also a regular contributor to its journal, the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*; consequently his sympathies were with those who acted from their convictions.

Within a few years after my joining the Brahmo Samaj my father left my village home in despair and went to spend his remaining years in Benares. Vidyasagar Mahashay did not quite like this proceeding, as will be manifest from the following incident. During his residence in Benares, my father once visited Calcutta, and as his usual practice was, called at the house of his friend Pandit Vidyasagar. The latter who had scant regard for the forms of orthodox Hinduism taunted my father for his settling down in Benares. The following is the substance of the conversation, that

took place between them, as reported to me by a third party who was present on that occasion.

Vidyasagar—Well Haran, you have settled down in Benares; but have you learnt to smoke *ganja* ?

My father—What connectoin is there between settling down in Beniars and smoking *ganja* ?

Vidyasagar—Don't you see, according to popular belief, as soon as you die in Benares you are to become the god Shiva. But Shiva is a notorious *ganja*-smoker. Is it not the wiser course then to habituate yourself to *ganja*-smoking ? Otherwise the first experiment may be a sore trial to you.

Soon after my joining the Brahmoo Samaj, my father expelled me with my wife and my infant daughter from his house and we came to reside in Calcutta. Vidyasagar Mahashay did not lose sight of us, but went on making kind enquiries about us, and giving me such advice as he thought necessary.

There was one incident that took place within this pericd which is worth recording. Though still a student, I was keeping a

separate house with my young wife and my infant daughter with great difficulty, managing my expenses from my Scholarship funds. During this period of hard conflict, a school fellow of mine, who had married a widow and had been accordingly discarded by his father, who was a rich man of the town, and had some time ago left Calcutta and gone to the N.-W. Provinces, on a change, suddenly turned up one morning at the door of my house, directly from the Railway station, with his wife and child, himself in an advanced state of disease. The friend's conduct in the past had not been commendable and his friends had enough reason for giving him the cold shoulder. But my case was quite different that day. He had come to my door without intimation, himself unwell and his wife and child in a state of destitution. I could not refuse him admission into the house especially when I remembered that I had a hand in his marriage. Somehow we made room for them in our small house, and at once placed him under medical treatment. But his disease showed no sign of improvement, and we

began to entertain grave doubts as to his final recovery. At this stage he requested me, to exert my influence towards bringing his father to see him, and to bring about a reconciliation between them. As I was personally unknown to his father the request seemed to be a difficult one. Yet it made me very sorry to think that this last request, as I thought it then, of a friend should go unfulfilled. Meditating upon this question it struck me that Pandit Vidyasagar was a great friend of his father, and had considerable influence on him, and the thing, that I found difficult to achieve on my account, might be accomplished through his aid. Whereupon one morning I called on him. Love is such a thing ! From my very look he could gather that there was something preying on my mind, and before I opened my lips he began the conversation by asking :—“What is it that troubles you ?” Then I related the whole story to him. I did not know before that the Pandit had heard something from the father of my friend, about the latter’s previous conduct, which had given rise to deep dissatisfaction. He

broke out in an outburst of passionate resentment, severely scolded me for keeping connection with such persons, or receiving them in my house, and plainly told me he would sooner whip than help such miscreants. I was stupefied and dumb; and all my hopes about moving him in this matter vanished like a dream. For a few minutes I sat there speechless, marking the waves of resentment passing on that great countenance and pondering over the plan to be followed next. At last I began to move, I rose and bowed at his feet, only remarking,—“Alas! his last request I am unable to fulfil.” These words; it seemed, brought round the great man. He ordered me to take my seat again and tried to explain his great outburst, concluding with a promise that he would bring my friend’s father to my house the next morning. He literally kept that promise and brought the dying man’s father to my house next morning. An interview took place between father and son, from which field we both retired; the Pandit spending the time in making inquiries about the pecuniary condition of my friend and his plans and

purposes. Coming to know that their condition was quite miserable and that those expenses were being somehow met by me, he placed a currency note of ten rupees in my hands asking me to see that my friend's wife and child might not suffer. When he left, amongst our friends we talked over this strange phenomenon of his wishing to whip a man at one moment, and offering pecuniary aid for his wife and child at the next.

There was another incident which happened soon after which bore testimony to another trait of the great Pandit's character. His venerable mother was recently dead and he was so overwhelmed with sorrow that he temporarily retired from Calcutta and was living in a garden-house in the suburbs, where his friends thought it better not to disturb him by their visits. I too gave up the practice of occasionally seeing him. For months together it was found that the least thing that revived the memory of his mother would make him weep like a child. During this period two young men came to reside with some Brahmoo friends at a

students' lodging-house. Their past history was an interesting one. They belonged, they said, to respectable middle class families in the Madras Presidency; but being attracted towards Christianity they had to leave their native place and came to Bombay under Christian guardianship. For some reasons their baptism was deferred and they were sent up to Calcutta to be placed in the St. Xavier's College for education. At this stage they came in contact with a Brahmo young man who was a student of that College. From what they heard of Brahmoism and of the Brahmo-Somaj from this young man, they became anxious to see Mr. Keshub Chander Sen, who advised them to put up with the young Brahmos of that students' lodging. Here they came in contact with me. Their Hindu friends and relatives in Madras not having allowed any pecuniary aid to them and the Brahmo Samaj being too poor to render any aid in that way, they were at that time maintaining themselves by going about to see well-to-do citizens of Calcutta and raising subscriptions on their own behalf. This sort of existence

became too burdensome for them. They had secured the signatures of a number of Calcutta magnates, for instance, in a subscription book, by visiting the British Indian Association on one of its Committee days. But the greatest possible difficulty was experienced in realizing those subscriptions. They returned day after day from the doors of these big men—either the Durwan not having permitted them to see the master, or the Dewan Babu having dismissed them with orders to come some other time. Thus precious time was lost in wandering about from door to door, and their needs were far from being supplied. At this stage they came to me and entreated to me to use my influence with Pandit Vidyasagar to get some promise of help for them. Inasmuch as the latter was going through a period of mourning, I could not take them to his suburban residence, nor could I give them a letter. At this extremity they decided upon seeing the great reformer without my letter of introduction. The following is the report they gave me after their return. After hearing

their whole story, Vidyasagar Mahashay first showed marked displeasure, declaring their sufferings to be a fit punishment for deserting their parents ; but he soon relented and showed considerable sympathy with their present trials. He strongly censured the cruel and irresponsible conduct of the rich men of Calcutta in first signing their names in a subscription book and afterwards leaving the boys to the mercy of underlings. He took the subscription book from them, tore out the pages containing the signatures and threw the book away, asking them never to seek interview with these rich men again. He concluded by promising them a monthly help of twenty rupees till they heard from their friends and relations in Madras. He also gave a letter to his Manager in Calcutta, in which there was an order to pay an additional thirty rupees for any emergency that might occur.

Within a few years I became quite absorbed in Brahma Samaj work and could see him only occasionally, when the talk mostly turned on his splendid library of which he was so fond. His library, on which he had

spent thousands, was a sight worth seeing and it was a pleasure to me to have a look at the books.

The following incidents perhaps happened during this period. On one occasion a Madrasi friend of mine came with his wife to spend some time with us in Calcutta. They were my guests. They wished very much to see the widow-marriage reformer. I took both of them to see the Pandit. He gave them a hearty welcome, invited them to dinner one day and presented a beautiful *sari* to my friend's wife. After this, one afternoon, we were surprised to find Vidya-sagar Mahashay coming to my house in a carriage to take my friend and his wife out for sight-seeing. When my friends returned they were quite enthusiastic about the manner in which the great Pandit had entertained them.

On another occasion I was sitting with the venerable Pandit in his study when an old woman belonging to the Eurasian community turned up with a written petition for pecuniary help. Looking into the petition he said, "Why don't you go to your own

people, I mean to Christians? The wants of the native population are too many and too urgent for our charity." But before he could finish the sentence he observed that the woman was panting from exertion in ascending the steps. He at once stopped, went up to her and said, "Oh, you are panting, why did you not send up the petition from downstairs? They have done wrong by letting you come up. Shall I call my servant with a fan to fan you?" By that time she was a little stronger and said that she did not want to be fanned. Without a further word the Pandit opened his box and gave her five or ten rupees, the exact sum I do not remember.

The third occasion also was a memorable one. A well-known educated Bengali, a dear friend of Pandit Vidyasagar, once came to Calcutta for the treatment of a niece of his, whose mind was wandering. She was a favourite child of the family, and one of Vidyasagar's pets. She was a young woman then, a mother of children. Since the outbreak of her malady she became an object of anxious care to Pandit Vidyasagar

as well as her family. They came and began to live in a house, on one of the public streets of the town, where Pandit Vidyasagar was a daily visitor. As a mark of her wandering mind the diseased lady took it into her head the fancy that she would eat nothing unless Vidyasagar offered it to her mouth. So she shut up her mouth and went on fasting. When the thing was reported to the great Pandit he smiled and offered to come to the house twice daily to feed her. He would sit by her as a father, coax her with many endearments, then take up the morsel in his hand and present it to her, when she would open her mouth and swallow it. This thing went on for many days. People were struck to see how the Pandit not only made time to come to the house twice every day, but laid aside the ordinary caste scruples for feeding, though a Brahmin himself, a Sudra woman, simply because she was the daughter of a valued friend of his and one whom he had loved almost from her infancy. Now during this his visiting period, one day, myself with a friend of mine called at the house to pay our respect to the

uncle of that lady. There were a number of other men, who had also called for a similar purpose. Finding it more agreeable to sit in the open veranda of the house by the side of the street, we were all seated there, when the great Pandit arrived. He was delighted to find so many of us there, a great treat for his social instincts. He requested us to stay on till he had finished his feeding business and returned. We did so. He came and began his stories, which kept all of us in roars of laughter. At last he requested his friend to send for a few pice worth of *Muri* (a kind of fried and puffed rice, used by the poor men of Bengal). When *Muri* was brought, he requested us to eat it, and he also began to make his tiffin out of it. Just fancy the picture of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar sitting with his friends in the open by the side of a public street and chewing *Muri*. Just at that moment there came a Bengali Christian street-preacher, who knew me personally. He drew nigh unto me, was struck to find me chewing *Muri*, and began conversation by asking me what I thought about my salva-

tion. He plainly told me that my Brahmoism would not do and that I had come only half way and was halting on the road. Pandit Vidyasagar was immensely amused by his talk and wanted to make fun of him. The Christian had never seen the Pandit it seemed, for otherwise he would have been more respectful towards him. The Pandit said, "Leave those young fellows, sir, they have yet enough time to think of their salvation; come to us, old rogues, who are about to depart this life." That mode of address should have been enough for the Christian preacher to find the spirit in which the invitation came. But he did not see it. Full of enthusiasm he went to the side where the Pandit was sitting and began his preaching. A few witty remarks of the former convinced him that the tone and temper of the old man was quite different from what he wanted. Within a few minutes he left Vidyasagar's presence in a rage, saying, "What an old reprobate sinner you must be, to treat such things thus. You are sure to rot in hell." There was hearty laughter

after the man left. The Pandit said to me, "Don't let him know my name ; for if you do, he will be further shocked. I only wanted to make a little fun over these men's habit of preaching to others in season and out of season."

Two more personal reminiscences linger in my memory and seem to be worth recording. Some time during the succeeding years, when my eldest daughter Hemlata was a girl of fifteen or sixteen years and was studying a class-book which contained an extract from Pandit Vidya-sagar's preface to the first edition of his book on the remarriage of Hindu widows, she became an admirer of the style as well as the ideas contained in it. She had heard of the Pandit from me and was looking up to him as a hero and a great man. But after reading that extract her admiration for the reformer became great, and she requested me to take her to see the great man once. It at once struck me that it was certainly an omission not to have introduced her to the great reformer. So I went to him at once to arrange for a

visit. The next day as I was taking Hemlata in a carriage, she observed, "Papa, Vidyasagar Mahashay is an old Pandit. He is in favour of widow-remarriage, but does he like keeping girls unmarried till they attain maturity? What will he say to you when he finds me, the grand-daughter of a venerated Brahmin and a friend of his, remaining unmarried till sixteen?" I smiled when I heard this and said: "You do not know Vidyasagar; he is a reformer even in this matter."

When we approached the great Pandit, he gave my daughter a warm reception, introduced her to his daughter and entertained her with sweetmeats. At last when I related to him the substance of our conversation held in the carriage, he laughed most heartily, and addressing my daughter, said: "You seem to think that your father alone is a reformer and a *bahadur* (i.e., a hero) in this matter: don't you know that I have not allowed my daughters to be married in their childhood? All of them grew up, till they were of your age and perhaps older, and

were then united to suitable husbands." Then looking to the face of my daughter, and pointing to himself, he playfully said : " Don't be anxious if your father does not get you married betimes ; here is your bridegroom, you are my sweetheart, come to this old man in due time and he will gladly accept you as his bride." It is well-known to all Hindus in Bengal that grand-fathers often call their grand-daughters their sweet-hearts. So the great Pandit played the grand-father to my daughter on that occasion. His remarks caused roars of laughter amongst all present.

The last memorable incident was a characteristic one. It happened in 1891 or 1892 shortly before his death. We were then residing in a house close to Vidyasagar's College. The ladies of our house complained to me one day that school boys had been seen after school hours loitering on the terrace of the College to look at and tease in various ways such of our girls as went to the terrace of our house in the evenings to have a stroll in the open air, thereby causing them inconvenience. One day during my

visit to the great Pandit I reported this matter to him. He was highly incensed. The next day in the evening he suddenly turned up in the College house, stealthily came up to the terrace and actually found a number of boys trying to tease our girls. He prevented their escape, took down their names, gave strict orders to shut the terrace door after school hours; and the next day severely punished the offenders.

Thus was the Pandit always kind and helpful towards me. Indeed it is a great privilege for a man to be able to come in personal contact with a great man like him. His memory is a precious legacy which truly enriches us. That memory I shall cherish till death closes upon me; and a part, only a small part, of that legacy I leave for those who are coming after us.

II

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF PANDIT
DWARAKANATH VIDYABHUSHAN,—
THE EDITOR OF THE
SOMAPRAKASH.

THE name of Pandit Dwarakanath Vidya-
bhushan is perhaps unknown to people
outside Bengal and his memory may be
growing dim in the Province itself, but
forty years ago, his name was one universally
respected in Bengal and he was one of our
leading figures. His paper the *Somaprakash*,
next after the *Hindoo Patriot* of Kristoda
Pal, was the most influential in this province,
remarkable alike for its literary excellence
and the dignity and loftiness of its tone.
So I hope some account of the life of its
editor will be interesting. Pandit Vidya-
bhushan was my maternal uncle. I was
born in his house, at Changripota, ten miles

south-east of Calcutta, on the 31st of January 1847. My uncle was employed at that time in the Calcutta Sanskrit College, either as Assistant Secretary or a professor of Sanskrit literature. I was the first little boy born in the house after many years. So my advent, as I heard from my mother, was hailed by the ladies of the house with the loud blowing of conch-shells, and my uncle, upon his first visit to the village home after that event, saw his newly arrived nephew with the present of a gold-mohur as a mark of his sympathy with his sister.

After this I grew up before the eyes of my uncle and of my maternal grandfather Pandit Hara Chandra Nyayaratna, a great Sanskrit scholar himself, a well-known figure at that time in learned Calcutta society and an esteemed Brahmin of the village; for though transferred for some years to my village home, I was constantly before their eyes in the course of the growth and progress of my life. My mother would bring me every now and then to the Changripota house, and then both my grandfather and my uncle would give her

such instructions, about bringing up the boy, as they thought necessary.

Thus almost with the dawning of my self-consciousness the revered figures of my grandfather and my uncle were placed before my eyes, as models for imitation. The fact that I was brought so early to Calcutta, for education, was due to their advice, and room was made for me in their house. To my great misfortune, however, my maternal grandfather fell ill shortly after my arrival at Calcutta, in 1856, and passed away within a year or so, leaving my charge to his illustrious son Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan and to my father.

The first remembrance of the latter that lingers in my memory is that of a dignified-looking man, grave and solemn in his deportment, dreaded by all his dependents, spending most of his time in his closet, speaking little and always engaged in his study. Indeed his manner was so grave that even his sisters, when passing before his room, in the village home, would take care that no noise was made by their ornaments or their steps.

It was chiefly through his advice, I think, that I was placed in the Calcutta Sanskrit College. After my admission there, he made it a rule to call me to his presence twice or thrice in the week and examine me about the progress I was making. Speech would not come to me, when in his august presence, and excepting on one occasion, I think I never told a lie to him, for I found him hating all manner of falsehood from the bottom of his heart, and his manner was such, that the moment I looked at his face, all lying propensities vanished as it were. For my truthfulness he showered his affections on me, and always placed implicit trust in all I said. That encouraged me further in being honest and truthful.

So great was my reverence for him, that whatever mending of conduct, that I once promised to him, I always took care to enforce upon myself to the best of my power. One incident I vividly remember. One of the bad things that my co-lodgers tried to teach me, as reported in my Vidyasagar article, was the smoking of

tobacco. I was a boy of twelve years then ; some of them taught me to smoke the *hookka*, and also cigars. That I was secretly doing so was unknown to my uncle. One day, however, I had to go up to him to ask for some payment. From my breath he could at once gather that I had smoked. So before paying he turned to me and asked—"How is it that you are smelling tobacco?" When he looked to my face, it became impossible for me to hide the fact from him and I humbly said—"I have smoked tobacco." Then he wanted to know how I had acquired the habit, and who had taught me. Again I could not hide the facts and gave him the whole history. He called to his presence the men, who had taught it to me, gave them a severe scolding and extracted a promise from me that "I would never smoke again." I have kept that promise up to this day. That was the first and last of my tobacco smoking. Since then I have almost a horror of all cigars and cigarettes. It pains me to see boys smoking. The thought that my uncle would enquire into my conduct,

was constantly present in my mind, and made me very careful as to how I behaved. He was himself temperate and abstemious, treating with contempt all follies and frivolities of youth. I do not remember, ever having found him indulging in any light talk or frivolous pursuits.

In the year 1859, when my uncle and Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar conjointly started the *Somaprakash* and when the latter used to pay frequent visits to our lodging, my aunt and my maternal grandmother came to reside in the Calcutta house. What a soothing comfort it was to me to have them near. Now I got the maternal smile and the maternal caress for which I was pining away. My maternal grandmother was a remarkable woman. Indeed most of the mothers of great men were remarkable women. I, at times, think some one should undertake to write a book called "The Mothers of Great Men." Such a writer will find enough materials for his volume in the lives of the mothers of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan Keshub Chunder Sen. I have personally

heard about the virtues of these good ladies and accordingly I can bear testimony to them. But I doubt not, if enquiries are made into the lives of the mothers of other men, who have figured as great and good in history, many noble and significant traits of character will be found in them which tended to the remarkable results in the characters of their sons. I feel almost tempted to say something about my maternal grandmother. But that would be a digression, and I conclude by simply saying that her character was quite worthy of her illustrious son and her virtues were great and significant. She was honest, truthful, warm-hearted and loving, charitable and forbearing, devoted to her religion and full of kindness for the poor and the suffering. When my maternal grandmother came, my uncle's expenses inevitably increased to meet the demands of her piety and devotion and her ceaseless ministrations for the suffering poor. To me she was always open-handed, secretly filling my little pocket with little sums to enable me to enjoy the best fruits and the best curiosities

of the season. My uncle, always took care to supply whatever his mother wanted, though it seems, in all cases he did not see the wisdom of her acts of charity. It was a custom with my grandmother in her village home every day to go for a bath to a tank at some distance from her house, with some money in her hand for distribution amongst some poor families whom she visited daily. In Calcutta she did not go out, but would never permit a beggar to turn away from her door empty-handed.

Within a few years after the opening of the C. S. E. State Railway, my uncle gave up his Calcutta residence and moved to his village home, at Changripota, where he established his paper and his press and began to attend the Sanskrit College as a daily passenger. After his settlement in the village, the educational and other needs of the surrounding villages began to press on his attention; and new demands came to claim his time and his resources. The first thing that struck him most forcibly was the want of a good first-class English School for the education of the boys of the

surrounding villages, who mostly belonged to respectable middle class families. So his first act was to start and maintain at his own cost, a high class English School with a staff of well-paid and able teachers. The institution was started in due course succeeded in a short time in obtaining Government aid. But its current expenses were never met by the students' fees with the Government aid added to them, and my uncle had to make up the balance by heavy contributions each month. Such contributions amounted--at times to sixty or seventy rupees per month; indeed a heavy sum for a man whose pay in the Sanskrit College amounted to hundred and fifty. It was the *Somaprakash* that enabled him to bear that heavy drain. It was observed on many an occasion that on his way home from Calcutta on the day of his receipt of his pay in the Sanskrit College, he considered it his first duty to go to the school to pay all the teachers whom he had previously asked to wait for him. He was very scrupulous about timely payment of teachers and looked upon it as great

hardship to put them into any inconvenience by irregularity of payment. In that matter he was methodical, punctual and just. Indeed his dutifulness in regard to that school was a striking trait of his character. He was not a man to shirk responsibility.

The same dutifulness was also observed in connection with his work in the Sanskrit College. While there, one could hardly guess from his ways that he was the editor of a leading Bengali journal. He never carried his papers to the College, nor did he do any business as editor there. When not engaged in actual teaching he was found seated in a retired corner of the College library, his reserved place, poring over the pages of the books he had to teach in the class or studying some works on history. Of history he was very fond. He had acquired a thorough knowledge of the English language by private study, and history was the subject to which he took passionately. His historical studies ranged over a vast field and he was the earliest Bengali writer of the histories of Greece and Rome.

He gave the day to his College duties and his studies, night he reserved for his work in connection with his paper and for such studies as that work required. He would shut himself in his study after his return from Calcutta, till a late hour in the night going through files of papers or writing articles for his journal. On many occasions I saw him writing or reading till 11 or 12 P. M. till the whole family had retired to rest and often times waking early, say at 5 A. M., I found him writing or reading his papers. I do not remember a single hour when I found my uncle idly talking or not doing his duty; nor do I remember of ever having found him sleeping. He would often say, the thing he abhorred with his whole heart was idleness.

He had a sub-editor for his paper who compiled weekly news, revised the letters of correspondents and helped him in seeing the paper through the Press on Sunday. But my uncle alone had the charge of writing of articles. These *Somaprakash* articles, as every one who remembers them will agree with me in thinking, were

characteristic ones. The tone was earnest and convincing and the language was chaste and idiomatic. Many regularly read the paper for its elevated tone and language, but I think its greatest charm was the earnestness of conviction with which every line was written. He never wrote anything for show or to please anybody. He threw himself heart and soul into the cause he advocated and dared meet every displeasure. It was the man behind the paper that was its greatest attraction and not what was written therein. Hence was the great influence of the *Somaprakash* both in official circles as well as amongst our countrymen.

One instance of the whole-heartedness with which the *Somaprakash* was edited is worthy of note. Of the many social abuses that called forth my uncle's voice of condemnation, there was one in which his own community of Brahmins was specially implicated. It was the custom, that prevailed amongst *Kulin Vaidic* Brahmins of his class, of affiancing little babies for marriage. I cannot say how that custom first originated. But in point

of fact it is prevalent amongst our class of Brahmins even now. I was engaged, for instance, when a one or two year old boy to a baby girl of two or three months. In the columns of his paper, my uncle, came down upon that custom in right earnest and tried to rouse his fellow-religionists against it. He partly succeeded; many of his own class, came to form strong convictions, against it. But the persistence and energy with which my uncle wrote against it were characteristic. His paper became partly unpopular amongst his general readers for the time and attention he bestowed on a comparatively sectional subject. But the suppression of that custom so prominently occupied his attention that he could not rest, as it were, until something had been done for its reform. At last he decided to show the way by discontinuing the practice in the case of his own children. He allowed his sons to grow up unaffianced, in the face of strong social condemnation. That shows the strength of conviction with which he wrote the *Somaprakash*.

Two characteristic incidents pertaining to the period of my boyhood and prominently bringing to view my uncle's broad sympathy and manly independence seem to be worth recording. I was then a boy of seventeen or eighteen reading in the first year's college class. I had begun to write Bengali poetry before that. Just about that time a respectable middle-class man of Bhowanipore, where I was then residing, was transported for fourteen years for some criminal offence. It produced some sensation amongst us. It wonderfully worked on my feelings and those feelings found vent in a poetical effusion. My friends and fellow-lodgers liked it and advised me to submit it to my uncle for publication in his paper. I did so with fear and trepidation, lest he should find fault with me for wasting my time in this way. In the College I quietly stepped into his retiring room and placed the packet in his hands, simply saying—"Something for the *Somaprakash*." Next day how great was my surprise when my uncle called me to his presence and said—"You write excellent poetry. I want more of such poetry." That

was to me more than the praise of thousands. I felt inspired and sat down to write more poetry. Poetical pieces on the same subject went on appearing week after week for many months. These were subsequently collected together and published in book form under the name of "Nirbashiter Bilap" or "The Transported Prisoner's Wailing." I can clearly trace the growth of my poetical talents to the encouragement given by my uncle.

The second incident also happened at about the same time. My father, who was the Head Pandit in our village school, sent an official letter for presentation to Mr. H. Woodrow, the Government Inspector of Schools. One morning on my way to College, I went to the office of Mr. Woodrow. He was then at his breakfast in a side room. I waited in his office room. When he came there I bowed and stepped forward with the letter. But he did not take it from my hand. I found him looking at my feet, which had slippers on, as was the custom with poor Brahmin boys.

Mr. Woodrow insisted on my leaving

my slippers at the door before he would accept my letter. I could not submit to such a demand. 'I did not take off' my slippers. He would not accept the letter, when the following conversation took place between us.

Mr. Woodrow—You have insulted me.

Myself—How?

Mr. Woodrow—By not taking off your slippers.

Myself (pointing to the shoes of Mr. Woodrow's Head Clerk)—The Kerani Babu has got his shoes on; does he insult you?

Mr. Woodrow—Those are shoes, but yours are slippers. Have you never heard of a rule of my office that I never allow people to enter the office with slippers on?

Myself—No, sir, such a strange rule I have never heard of, that slippers insult a man, whereas shoes do not. I hear such a thing for the first time in my life.

Mr. Woodrow—Now, will you leave your slippers at the door?

Myself—No, sir, I cannot.

Mr. Woodrow—You are a naughty boy; very impertinent; where do you read?

Myself—In the Sanskrit College, sir.

At this point I left the letter on Mr. Woodrow's table, bowed to him and was coming out, when he called me back and another little conversation took place.

Mr. Woodrow—You must have heard that Rajah Radhakanto Dev is seriously ill. He is one of your great men. I am going to see him, my carriage will be ready in five minutes. Will you accompany me in my carriage to see him ?

Myself—No, sir, I cannot accompany you, I have my class to attend. I am already late.

Mr. Woodrow—Suppose you accompany me, will you take off your slippers at the door of his room ?

Here I entered upon an explanation of the causes that would oblige me to take off the slippers there. Mr. Woodrow would not listen to an explanation and said—"I want no explanation, say yes or no."

Myself—Yes, sir, I shall take off the slippers there.

Mr. Woodrow—Why then don't you take them off in my room ?

Myself—Sir, you don't allow me to explain ; what answer can I make ?

Mr. Woodrow—Very well, go to college ; you are a very naughty boy.

After my return, Mr. Woodrow's demand and my refusal to submit to it became a subject of talk in the College, and reached the ears of my uncle, who called me to himself and gave me his benediction for having acted like a high-spirited boy. He ordered me to write out an account of the incident for his paper. I did so and he published it with a thundering article of his own, referring to Anglo-Indian pride and hauteur, and its deplorable consequences. Mr. Woodrow got so much angry that he took down my name in a note-book and issued an order to his office never to let me enter the Educational Department without his knowledge. But my uncle's attitude on the occasion was one of high dignity and fearless advocacy of the rights to honourable treatment of the people of this country. It should be borne in mind that my uncle was at that time a Government servant and employed in the Educational Department, where Mr. Woodrow had authority

In my Vidyasagar article, I have already mentioned the fact of our celebrating a widow-remarriage, according to Pandit Vidyasagar's rites, as early as 1868 ; and I have also stated how my friends the bridegroom and the bride, were put to severe persecutions and how they invited me, the match-maker, to go and join them as a co-lodger, and to stand by them during the great struggle. I felt that having encouraged them in the act it was my duty to stand by them when they surely stood in need of such help. So I decided to go and join them. But before I did so I felt it to be my duty to apprise my father of the earnest call and of my decision to respond to it. Accordingly, I wrote to my father, who was at my village, asking his permission to go and join the newly married couple. Though a personal friend of Pandit Vidyasagar himself, my father was faced by a great difficulty. For such a thing would not be tolerated by my fellow-villagers of whom my father was a leader. In his extremity my father secretly wrote to my uncle imploring him to use his influence towards dissuading me from such

a course. My uncle called me to see him in his village home. I went there ; he showed me my father's letter and had a prolonged conference, during the course of which I placed before him all the facts, the case, the great persecutions to which the married couple were being subjected, their severe pecuniary straits, the fact, that I was the match-maker and had a large hand in leading my friend into it, the state of health of my friend's wife, the manner in which my friend was being harassed by his own friends and relations and also how the lady absolutely needed in the house the presence of a friend and companion who could strengthen her and so on. My uncle gave me a patient hearing, after which I stopped and waited to know his decision. He calmly reflected for some moments and then broke out with the remarkable declaration—"No ; you cannot desert them, you should stand by them ; not to do so would be a neglect of plain duty on your part—a conduct unworthy of my nephew." I only did not clap my hands out of respect for him, but left him with the request to let my father know his

decision. He wrote to my father to say that after having promoted the marriage it was my duty to help them, and not to do so, would be neglecting a duty on my part and he could not advise me to do so. I saw my uncle's letter subsequently and admired its lofty uprightness.

There is another incident which happened during this period which still lingers in my memory. Tired by the incessant struggle in the midst of which we lived, and the cares and anxieties by which we were surrounded, both my body and mind became fatigued and I began to feel the need for rest for a few days. So I took leave of my friend and his wife, and went to Changripota to spend a few days in the company of my maternal grand-mother, whose very sight was a source of joy to me. Whilst resting there and spending time in idle conversation with my aunts and their children, I received a telegram at dead of night, one day, from the brother of my friend's wife, asking me to come to Calcutta at once, as things had happened absolutely needing my immediate presence. There was a train at 3 A.M. by

which I could return, but the station was at the distance of four or five miles, from my uncle's house, and in going to it by a short cut it was necessary to pass through paddy fields, all of which were flooded during that month of July. Besides, the night was a dark one and I might lose my way in the midst of the flooded and trackless fields. One can very well imagine the condition in which I was placed by that telegram. For a moment I did not know what to do. The ladies of the house were dead opposed to my venturing out in that dark night ; but my uncle came to my rescue. He said that the transmission of a telegram at that hour of night meant the occurrence of some serious danger, and it was my duty to go at once. He did not listen to the objections brought forward by my aunt and my grand-mother ; but at once engaged a man, at that late hour of night, to accompany me with a lamp, and see me safely arrive at the station. I came and found my friend's wife prostrate with grief to find her husband taken away by his relatives, and detain'd under one pretence or another at their place since the

previous morning. They were trying, as I learnt from her brother, afterwards, to persuade my friend to give up his re-married wife, to go through a ceremony of expiatory penance, and marry another girl according to orthodox Hindu rites. My friend turned a deaf ear to their entreaties and returned to his wife the next day.

Previous to 1868 my uncle had a sort of sympathy with the aims and purposes of the Brahmo Samaj. But since the introduction of the custom of street processions in imitation of the Vaishnavas, in the beginning of 1868, that sympathy declined, and the man-worship agitation of that year also convinced him that the Brahmo Samaj was running the danger of reducing itself into a sectarian cult and he began to call the young Brahmos *Kaishavas* or the sect of Keshub. His hostility to the new methods introduced by Mr. Sen was great. How great must have been his disappointment, therefore, when in August 1869 I formally and publicly joined the Brahmo Samaj under Mr. Sen. The fact that the nephew of Dwarakanath Vidya-bhushan, the sworn enemy of the Keshubic

cult, has gone over to the other side, produced a wide-spread sensation in our part of the country, and all the engines of social persecution were set agoing to repress the Kes-bubic cult as it was called.

At this extremity my mother came to my uncle's house at Changripota and called me there for a personal conference. I went and found my uncle calm and dignified, never giving expression to displeasure or irritation, trying to convince me by reason and argument of the error of the course I had taken. Of course I need hardly say that I was not convinced. I subsequently learnt from a letter of my uncle written to my father at that time that after prolonged discussion with me he had come to the conclusion that I was suffering from a sort of mono-mania, which can be fitly described as religious madness. My uncle concluded his letter by saying that I had passed beyond the reach of arguments.

Seeing me passing the F.A. with distinction in the beginning of 1869, his hopes however revived, as he told me afterwards, that though differing in matters of faith, I

would take up in a short time, a part of his heavy work, thus relieving him of his hard labours. In the meantime the Lieutenant Governor of the time intimated to the Principal of our College his desire of appointing such students of the Sanskrit College as passed the B. L. Examination, to the judicial service of the Province, for the reason of their having studied Hindu Law in Sanskrit. Pressure was accordingly brought upon me by our Principal, backed by my uncle, I think, and by other friends also, to go in for the B. L., and I was made to attend the law-lectures. I finished the law course by the time I passed the M. A. My uncle was anxiously waiting for the day when I would pass the M. A. ; for after that he had a mind, as I learnt afterwards, to appoint me Head Master of his school at Harinavi, and associate me in the work of the *Somaprakash*. I passed the M. A. successfully but there came the saddest, and severest second disappointment to my uncle. I formed the resolution of giving myself for the service of the Brahmo Samaj, and secretly wrote to Mr. Sen,

expressing a desire to join his mission. Mr. Sen at once accepted me and appointed me one of the teachers of the young ladies' school he had founded in connection with his Bharat Ashram.

Whenever I approached my uncle after this I found him dignified and calm, he gave no expression to his sore disappointment. He would avoid all talk about his affairs and would make only short and evasive replies to my questions about them.

About a year passed like this, towards the end of which news was brought to me that my uncle's health was failing and that he was carrying on his work with great difficulty. I at once went to Changripota and found him laid up. I had never seen him so poorly low. Standing by his bed I could not refrain from shedding tears. I at once felt that I should come to his rescue and at once relieve him of his arduous duties and allow him to go out for a change; and as my year of service in Mr. Sen's Ladies' School was drawing to a close. I thought I could leave that work from the

beginning of the next year and come and temporarily settle down at Changripota, taking up my uncle's work and allowing him to go for a change. When I broached the proposal to my uncle he was awfully moved and opened his heart to me for the first time about his second great disappointment.

Upon my return to Calcutta I asked Mr. Sen's permission to leave the work of the Ladies' School from the beginning of the next year, and to go to the rescue of my uncle. He quietly accepted my decision; but secretly considered my conduct, as I learnt afterwards, as a virtual desertion of mission work.

However I went and settled down at Harinavi, in the neighbourhood of Changripota, the place where my uncle's School was situated. My uncle made me the Secretary and Head Master of his School, the editor of his paper and the manager of his domestic and other affairs, and went to the N.-W. Provinces for a change.

I was at Harinavi for more than one and half years, during which period my health

also went down owing to the prevalence of malarious fever in the villages, and I was obliged to accept the head mastership of the South Suburban School at Bhowanipore, whither also I removed my uncle's Press and Paper for more convenient management. Here my uncle returned after his change and resumed his work relieving me of my duties.

During his stay here Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act was passed and as a mark of his displeasure and disgust my uncle stopped the *Somaprakash*, considering it more honourable to discontinue the paper than to abide by the degrading conditions imposed by the new law. Sir Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant Governor of the time, looked upon the discontinuance of the *Somaprakash* as a public calamity and invited my uncle to a private interview, during the course of which he used all his influence to persuade him to resume the publication of his paper. It was chiefly through his earnest request, I think, that my uncle revived the paper. But the old zeal was gone and it began to decline from that time in the earnestness of its tone and the straight-forwardness of its

views ; one cause of this, perhaps was, that owing to growing age and decline of health my uncle had to leave much of his work to paid assistants.

After his return, in addition to conducting the paper, my uncle began to publish a monthly journal called *Kalpādruma*, which soon attracted the notice of the educated classes of the country.

During his residence at Benares for a change he had been shocked to see the evil practices of the priests attached to the temples, and composed and published a poetical work called "Bisweswar Bilap" or the "Lamentations of the God Bisweswar" in which he decried those practices, and tried to expose the inner condition of that great place of pilgrimage.

In the meantime I once more became totally absorbed in Brahmō Samaj work and joined the Sathharan Brahmō Samaj Mission. My uncle went on working. He died in harness, so to say, laying down his life with his pen. His descendants subsequently discontinued the *Kalpādruma* and sold off the *Samaprasah*.

Thus closes the life of a really great and good man. But I cannot close this account without narrating one or two incidents that bore witness to his great love of justice and also his earnest interest in the welfare of his fellow-villagers. One incident happened in my presence. One morning previous to his departure for Calcutta, he was getting ready for his journey, when a young woman, belonging to a lower caste, a widow herself, was seen passing by his door and wailing most piteously. My uncle at once stopped her and inquired into the cause of her sorrow; when to his horror, the poor woman related her whole story to him; how she had been misled by a rich man of the village, how she had been enticed away from the guardianship of her poor widowed mother, how shelter was given to her in a house in the neighbourhood of the rich man's mansions, and now that she was with child, and because she shrank from her betrayer's proposal to prematurely destroy that child, how she had been ruthlessly turned out to live by begging or die in the streets. The

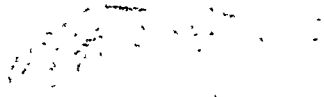
story filled the mind of my uncle with indignation, the like of which I had seldom witnessed. He could not take his breakfast well. He ordered the woman to come to him next morning. The next morning a man was sent to that rich man to ask him whether he was ready and willing to make suitable provision for the poor woman. And because the fellow would not give any such assurance a law-suit was instituted against him in the name of the widow, at my uncle's expense. I have not a distinct recollection of all the turns of that law-suit; only this much I remember that maintenance was ultimately secured from the rich man, who became a sworn enemy of my uncle from that time.

Another incident was also characteristic. One day my uncle was engaged in writing in his study when news was brought to him that a neighbour of his, who had been trying from some time past to fraudulently deprive a neighbouring widow and her son, of a piece of land, had entered the widow's house during her son's absence and was about to lay his hands on her, to compel her

to consent to the proposal. My uncle at once left his pen, called his own brother to follow him, and ran to the widow's house, arriving just in time to save her from ill-treatment. The assailants were pushed out of the house by my uncles and the fact of my uncle backing her ultimately saved the widow from the threatened misappropriation.

A few years before his death my uncle's attention was forcibly roused to the visible decay of moral and religious principles of the rising generation of the villages and he took steps to organise *Kathakatus* and *Kirtans* in the compound of his own house, to which he would invite his fellow-villagers, and specially the younger portion of the population to be present.

Thus he closed his life, ceaselessly trying to do good to others, undaunted in the pursuit of his ideals, and incessantly trying to leave society better than he found it. Of all men, his example had the greatest influence in moulding my character in my younger days. That example is still before me and I cannot contemplate it without being chastened and elevated,



ANANDAMOHAN BOSE.

III

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF ANANDA MOHAN BOSE.

BEFORE commencing the reminiscences of my friend Ananda Mohan Bose I must once more ask the reader to refer to other sources of information, notably to Mr. H. C. Sarkar's biography of Mr. A.M. Bose, for a complete account of his life. My object is to note down such facts alone as came within my personal observation and still linger in my memory.

I first came to know my late friend Ananda Mohan Bose personally in 1869, when we were both formally initiated together into Brahmoism by the late Brahmananda Keshub Chunder Sen, on the occasion of the consecration of the *Bharat-barshiya Brahma Mandir*, in the month of August of that year. Before that we, all young students, had seen Ananda Mohan and had heard of him. The distinction with which he had passed the University examinations had placed him as an ideal

before us. Besides, the eminent qualities of his character, as reported by his friends and associates, were also subjects of talk amongst us. To me he was specially dear : for though not personally acquainted with him, I was admiring him from a distance for his warm interest in the Brahmo cause. He was a Brahmo in faith, like myself, for some years, before our public initiation, and was taking an active part in Brahmo Samaj work.

The day we met we were drawn towards each other by some magical influence as it were. We came into the world in the same year 1847, entered the Church on the same day, and were from that day united in love and spiritual companionship. Within a few months, after our initiation, Ananda Mohan obtained the Premchand Roychand Scholarship and accompanied Mr. Sen to England, to finish his education in one of the English Universities.

He was in that country for nearly four years, during which period many important events happened in the Brahmo-Samaj. There was a tug of war between

the party of Mr. Sen and a party of advanced thinkers on the subject of Female Education and Female Emancipation. After his return from England Mr. Sen had established a school for adult young ladies, where I was a teacher, as already reported in my Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan article ; but the ideal of female education adopted by Mr. Sen was not after the mind of a section of our fellow-believers headed by the late Messrs. D. M. Das and D. N. Ganguli ; and they proceeded to found another school where a more liberal standard of education for girls was followed. There was also a conflict on the subject of allowing ladies to sit outside the screen in our places of public worship. Mr Sen's friends were not ready and willing in the beginning, to allow that right to the ladies of the advanced families ; accordingly there was something like a little schism in the Church. The advanced section gave up attending Mr. Sen's services and opened, in another place, a weekly Divine service of their own. In course of time Mr. Sen came to see the wisdom of reserving a

wing in his Mandir for the ladies of the advanced section, where they could sit outside the screen, and the rival service was given up. Besides the formation of this party of Female Emancipationists in the Brahma Samaj, another party had also made its appearance who clamoured for the introduction of constitutional modes of government in the management of the affairs of the Church. Of this party I was a member.

At this juncture my friend returned from England and joined the High Court as a barrister, I was living then at Bhowanipore as Head Master of the South Suburban School and he came to reside on the South Circular Road, within a few minute's walk from my house. So I met him almost daily. My love for him drew me into friendship with his wife, her sisters, and with all who were dear and near to him. I spent hours upon hours in his house talking upon matters relating to the work of the Brahma Samaj, and the general progress of the country. My friend earnestly sympathised with the causes of Female

Education and Female Emancipation and at once stood by the side of our friends Messrs. D. M. Das and D. N. Ganguli in keeping up the school for the high education of women which they had established and were maintaining with considerable difficulty. Properly speaking, from this time the maintenance of that institution fell upon him and Mr. D. M. Das. It was a good round sum that he began to contribute to its funds month after month.

With our idea of constitutional government in the Church also he warmly sympathised. He specially made common cause with us in our efforts to get trustees appointed and a trust-deed executed for the Bharatbarshiya Brahmo Mandir, Mr. Sen's Chapel, toward the building of which many of the constitutionalists had contributed. Somehow or other Mr. Sen was afraid of conceding to their demand, and the agitation was kept up for years, the constitutionalists publishing a monthly journal called *Samadarshi* or "The Liberal", of which they made me the editor, to ventilate their ideas.

Ananda Mohan's house became something like a club where all advanced thinkers met to discuss their ideas. At this time two subjects occupied our foremost attention. First, the necessity for doing something for the student population, secondly, the need for a political association for the middle classes of the country. The British Indian Association, under the guidance of the late Krišto Das Pal, was doing excellent service to the country in its own way at that time. But we all felt that it was rather aristocratic, and there was need for an association representing the middle classes of the country. Much of our talk at these friendly gatherings was occupied by the pressing necessity that we all felt on this subject. Mr. Surendranath Banerjea, who came to reside in Calcutta at about this time, would be present at many of these meetings and threw himself heart and soul into the matter. At last as the result of our repeated conferences the foundation of the Indian Association was decided upon. One day I and my friend waited upon Pandit Iswar Chandra

Vidyasagar, to ask him to encourage and guide us by heading our movement. He could not accede to our request but gave us sound advice, pointing out to us the dangers that were to be avoided.

In due course the Indian Association was ushered into existence at a public meeting held in the Albert Hall, which Mr. Banerjea made it a point to attend, in spite of the death of one of his children on that day or the day previous. Of course, Ananda Mohan was a prominent figure amongst us on that occasion. As far as I remember, we made him the first Secretary of the newly established Association and I was given the charge of overlooking the collections.

Messrs. Bose and Banerjea had in the meantime opened operations amongst the student population of Calcutta, in which I also joined them. Hundreds of students flocked to hear the speeches of these two leaders of Young Bengal and returned edified and strengthened in their noble resolves.

At about this time, I think at the beginning of 1877, I fell seriously ill, so much

so that my life was despaired of. I was then serving as a teacher of Sanskrit in the Hare School and living in a house on the Amherst Street, where my friend, in spite of his pressing business engagements, would pay his visits almost every day, and sit by the side of my sick bed trying to cheer me up by his conversation, which, all who knew him in life, must remember to have been characteristically sweet. He was known to all as the mild, gentle, loving, self-effacing Mr. Bose. His very presence had a soothing and elevating effect on all who were afflicted.

Indeed, ardent love and unostentatious goodness were his characteristics. The manner in which he loved his mother, his brothers and his wife and children, was often a subject of talk amongst us, his friends. How often did it happen that returning from the High Court, he found his dear old mother, quietly seated in his room, perhaps counting her beads, and then he would at once throw aside his 'over-coat and fall prostrate on the ground before his mother, placing his head on her lap, lying in that condition for minutes, till the old lady would

pat him on the back and order him to rise.

Here again I am drawn aside to say something about my friend's mother who also was a remarkably pious woman. In point of religious devotion and dutifulness, we have seldom seen her equal. Her husband died very early when my friend was a little boy, and that good lady had to manage extensive estates, look after the education of her children, and keep up the power and prestige of the family in the village. All these duties she quietly performed with *calm resignation and unflagging zeal*. Her devotion to her husband was so great that from the time of his decease to the day of her death, she would never permit his name to be even casually mentioned in her presence, without stopping the speaker for a minute, joining her hands, and placing them on her head as a mark of respect for his memory. So great was her reverence for great and good men that she would never drive in a carriage even before the tomb of a Mahomedan saint, without alighting from her carriage, and walking before it in humble silence. On one occasion, when a

number of pilgrims were sailing in a vessel to the shrine of Jagannath at Puri, they were overtaken by a storm, the ship went down, and they were all drowned. My friend's mother was to have formed one of the party in that vessel, but some cause had intervened to prevent her from so doing. When informed of the sad catastrophe that had befallen the pilgrims, the good lady instead of rejoicing that a similar fate had not overtaken her, was found weeping that her god did not deem her worthy of such a blessed death.

Is it any wonder that the gifted son of such a mother should also be remarkable for his piety? However that is a digression. To return to my subject: Ananda Mohan's love for those who were related to him or drawn to him by friendship was a characteristic feature. I shall never forget the day when his younger brother Dr. M. M. Bose returned from America after finishing his education there. I was present in his house on that occasion. We were all eagerly expecting his return that morning. Hearing his carriage driving in I went up to the door

and gave him a hearty welcome ; but Ananda Mohan ran forward and warmly embracing him led him to a seat where he held him for sometime clasped to his heart, as if they could not bear to part. We were all inspired with a sense of awe, as it were, by that manifestation of fraternal affection. His loving and reverential devotion to his elder brother, the late Haramohun Bose, was also characteristic. It was beautiful and elevating.

After recovery from my illness in 1877, I went for a change to Monghyr, in the province of Behar, for a few months. Ananda Mohan also came there shortly after with his wife and the family of his father-in-law to give a change to a sick brother-in-law, the younger brother of Dr. J. C. Bose. At Monghyr, soon after our arrival, my youngest daughter died a violent death from a fall from the terrace of the house we occupied. It was a very severe shock to my wife, who became quite prostrated with grief. After his arrival at the town, my friend made it a point to come to my house almost every day to speak to my wife and give her

some consolation. She loved him and had great respect for him, so his words gave her great consolation. My wife would often say "to see him is a great pleasure in itself ; and to hear him speak, would make one forget all sorrow. I wonder how one's words can be so gentle and soothing." His very advent in my house would be heralded by a chorus of joy that my little children would raise. They would immensely please him by lisping their observation—"you are an Englishman", referring to his mode of dressing.

Strangely enough it so happened that within a short time, my friend lost one of his sons by disease and death at that station. Then came the turn for me to look to his consolation and that of his wife. The calm resignation with which he bore that calamity was a lesson to us all. He spoke few words, but his very demeanour showed that his eyes were fixed somewhere else and that he was literally kissing the rod that had smitten him. One morning I went to his house and finding Mrs. Bose quite disconsolate offered to take both of them to the side of the river Ganges, which flowed near by, by way of a

diversion. When standing by the riverside I found my friend entranced with a new thought, his whole countenance aglow with emotion, with his eyes transfixed on the river, apparently lost to all sense of things happening around us. But not so was the condition of Mrs. Bose. The beautiful scenery somehow made her sorrow more poignant, and she was quite over-powered. Then my friend began to speak to his wife about calmly resigning our fortunes to the providence of God. That sorrow would certainly benefit them spiritually, he said, if they could only resign themselves to the goodness of God. No words of mine can convey an adequate idea of the sweet, gentle and loving care with which he bent over his sorrowing wife who had fainted away and the words of faith and trust in the goodness of God he spoke to her. Such moments are very precious. You can then see a man at his best, and I shall never forget the scene and the calm majestic faith that every word of my friend indicated.

The year 1878 was the ever-memorable year when the second great schism in the

Brahmo Samaj took place, after the marriage of Mr. Sen's daughter with the Maharaja of Kuch-Bihar. We both became involved in that great controversy and both had a hand in the formation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. What words of mine can adequately express the deep, very deep pain that my friend felt on that occasion. He did not enter into it lightly. He was living then in his chambers, after having left his family at Monghyr. How many days, and sometimes nights, I spent in his chambers, lying on a couch with my arms crossed on my bosom, and with eyes closed, lost in deep thought, my friend all the time walking by my side apparently lost in the same thought, stopping at long intervals near my couch, bending over my prostrate figure and saying, "Sivnath Babu, what should we do? A great responsibility rests upon us." In that state of agony of mind he wrote a letter to Mr. Sen imploring him to take certain things into consideration. This letter though unheeded by the latter at the time, stands as a monument of the noble and lofty spirit that actuated my friend at the time. He

also called more than once on Mr. Sen to have personal conference with him on the subject of his daughter's marriage in contravention of some of our well-known principles, but nothing could ward off the danger.

The night of 2nd February, 1878, in which a number of friends held a meeting at 93, College Street, where the newly established Indian Association was then located and where I was residing at the time, under the presidency of the old and revered Babu Shib Chander Deb of Konnagar, to discuss the question of sending a letter of protest to Mr. Sen, is ever-memorable in Brahma history. The proceedings commenced with earnest prayer and we sat deliberating till about 2 A.M. when the question of sending the letter was decided upon and its points settled. But a new difficulty arose at that point. Our friends Messers. D. M. Das, late Vakil of the High-Court, and D. N. Ganguli, late Assistant Secretary of the Indian Association, raised the question as to the next step we wanted to take, in case Mr. Sen gave no heed

to our letter. Were we prepared, they asked, to start a new Samaj? Every one was taken aback, for they had not thought over such a contingency till then. Myself and my friend positively declared that such a thought was till then out of our mind, and that we were earnestly hoping that things would settle down, without leading to a rupture in the body. Whereupon Messrs. D. M. Das and D. N. Ganguli refused to sign the letter with us, declaring that they would not make common cause with persons who were not prepared to "go the whole hog with them," the characteristic expression used by Mr. D. M. Das at that meeting. So these two left without signing the document at that meeting, which they however did sign two days after.

How Mr. Sen treated that letter and what were the consequences are matters of Brahma Samaj history and I need not dilate upon them here. My point is to note down what my friend did afterwards. We were soon involved in the tremendously difficult task of organising the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. We were all novices in

the art of constitutional organisation. Ananda Mohan alone, by reason of his residence in England, and his association with many Societies there, had some knowledge of it. So most of the meetings for laying down the constitution of the new Samaj and for framing its rules were held in his house. I wonder to think at this distance of time, how we sat at his dining table, after the table-cloth had been removed, day after day, till an early hour in the morning, deliberating upon the constitution of the new Samaj. One incident in that connection I vividly remember. That day I had to superintend the publication of our two journals, "Brahmo Public Opinion" and "Tattva kaumudi". So I had to work from early morning till 8 or 9 p.m. From the editor's table, after a short repast I had to run to my friend's house to take part in that day's deliberations, which were very important and from which my friends could not agree to see me absent. I went and sat till 12 p.m. when my whole frame absolutely needed rest, and I could no longer sit. I found I was not attending to the business but

dozing. At this point, in order to avoid their notice, I quietly slipped down from my chair below my friend's dining table, and stretched myself in sound sleep on the matting. After an hour or so a question turned up which needed consultation with me, when every one turned round to see me, and how great must have been their surprise to find me missing. At once a search was made and after a few minutes my friend discovered me quietly sleeping below the table. So he dragged me out by my ankles, to the laughter of all present. As I am narrating this event I almost see my friend smiling at me, for this incident many times formed a subject of talk and merriment to both of us in subsequent years.

I was tired but my friend knew no tiring. He was indefatigable. Indeed, the very news that he was in town and was coming to the Committee Meeting of the Samaj would often fill the minds of the other members with the dread that they would be for ever detained by him at the meeting till a late hour of the night; for his custom

was, whenever any member wanted to depart, to rise from his seat, to hold the departing friend by the arm and forcibly make him resume his seat by saying, "Please wait a short time; we all must soon depart". That "soon" seldom came within one or two hours more.

In the beginning of 1879 we opened the City School. My friend and myself chiefly conceived the plan and carried it out. Our objects in opening the Institution were twofold. First we thought the school would enable us to have near at hand a number of earnest Brahma teachers, who would render valuable help to us in carrying on the work of the newly established Samaj; secondly, we wanted to bring a pretty large number of young students within reach of our moral and spiritual influence. With these objects in view we opened the School. Mr. Surendranath Banerjea gladly consented to join us in opening the Institution, for his interest in the moral welfare of the student community, at that time as in subsequent years also, was great. So the prospectus was issued in the names of three

of us. I became its first Secretary and organiser, Mr. Banerjea kindly undertook to give his service as a teacher and Ananda Mohan supplied the initial expenses.

A few months after, another Institution, in the spirit of the Brahma Samaj, called the Students' Weekly Service, was also started, which held weekly meetings for prayer and the delivery of religious and moral discourses. ; Of course we did not ask Mr. Banerjea to join us in this. The City School and the Students' Service imposed further work on myself and my friend. These two institutions involved new work, in addition to the work, already mentioned, needing frequent conferences with my friend. I became almost a daily visitor to his house and spent hours upon hours in close confereñcé with him. Some of these conferences would stretch far into the night, making the return home difficult for me, and obliging me to spend the night at his house. One day's occurrence still lingers in my memory. That evening we were shut up in his study, after dinner, absorbed in conversation till 1 or 2 A.M.

We had no idea of the hour of night till Mrs. Bose, quietly stepped into the room through a side door, with wonder and amazement in her eyes. Her very looks excited our laughter; we felt as if we were two culprits maturing some dangerous plans and arrested in the midst of our nefarious work. But her remonstrances soon brought us down in our laughter and I apologized to her, telling her the important nature of our deliberations. We were forced to close up then and there and as it was too late for me to return home, I accompanied my friend to sleep in the same bed with him for the remaining hours of the night.

The question will naturally occur to many how could my friend afford to spend so much time on such matters and yet successfully carry on the business of a practising lawyer. That was a mystery to us also. How often have I heard attorneys and others connected with the High court say—"Alas! if Bose could give more time to his legal practice, he would far outshine many others." But that thought was not in Bose's mind. He looked upon the law-

papers, as he said to his wife one day, as so many serpents. Their very sight filled his mind with dread. How can successful legal practice be possible to such persons ! Yet the genius of my friend made him a successful legal practitioner.

The truth of the thing is this that my friend's mind was somewhere else, in the service of God and of his country. No truer patriot than himself have I ever seen. His addresses as President of the Indian National Congress, his oration in connection with the opening of the Federation Ground, where he was literally carried on men's shoulders from his death-bed almost, and also the many speeches he had delivered in this country and in England bore testimony to the ardent love he bore to his country and to his people. He had a great mind to settle down in England for some years, as an independent counsellor to the friends of India in Parliament, and to the Indian Committee. That he thought would be of greater use than to enter Parliament like Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji or Mr. Bhowmuggrie and become involved in current English

politics. I saw the wisdom of the course suggested and we held conference together about raising the necessary funds. Unfortunately my friend had a large family, and he had not been able to lay by anything like a fortune, and as there was no rich man to back us in carrying out our objects, it was eventually dropped to his great sorrow.

The raising of the City School into a College in subsequent years was not quite after my mind. But in that matter I acceded to the wishes of my friend: After having raised it into a College he wanted to place it in the hands of a devoted brotherhood like that of the Poona Fergusson College, But in this idea he was opposed by many of his College associates and severely criticised by many of his Brahmo friends. His motives were misunderstood and many unkind things were said about him. Baffled in his noble efforts my friend made over the College to a body of trustees with a constitution that will stand as a monument of the high principles that actuated him in founding and keeping up that College.

To me, his close personal friend, his deep piety was the most attractive feature in his character. He was humble, gentle, charitable and forgiving and forbearing in all his dealings with others. He was prayerful and devout ; and high, noble and holy in all his aspirations. But his nature was secretive in these matters. He always avoided display and exercised his piety in the solitude of his study. Day after day he spent long hours in prayer and meditation, and at times retired from the engagements of the town to some solitary abode far away, to be able to spend his time in devotional study, in meditation and prayer. How he could be alone with the Alone, even in the midst of the pressing engagements of the town, the diaries he has left behind bear witness to. Those diaries are filled with impassioned prayers offered during press of business for repose of the spirit and spiritual guidance. One incident occurs to me relating to this side of his nature. It was a Sunday, a day of rest. He had confined himself to his study from an early hour, and had ordered for

a specially abstemious breakfast, with strict injunctions not to disturb him in his study. At the appointed hour his wife sent his tea by a servant. The tea was placed before him on the table. It remained there for more than two or three hours without his drinking it, himself being all the time engaged in devotional study, meditation and prayer. After three hours another cup was taken to him by his wife herself, which he drank. Then came the hour for breakfast ; but he would not come. He sent back the servants with promises to come soon ; but there was no sign of his coming. Mrs. Bose went twice, but had to return with the same assurance, till at last she too gave up the attempt in despair, and chose to patiently wait. It was near to 2 P.M. when I called for some special business with him. Mrs. Bose gave me the whole story. Finding her tired of waiting and disquieted in her mind, I went to the study of my friend, and before any explanation of my visit was offered, literally drew him by the hand into the dining room and made him sit to his breakfast.

During his residence in Calcutta he would often retire to his Dum-Dum-house with a pet servant and give himself to irregular diet and the practice of devotion to his heart's content.

But his modesty was so great that he would shrink from the least display of his piety to others. He shrank from offering vocal prayers even in the presence of his wife and children, and to my remonstrances, against the consequent neglect of domestic devotions, he would always reply by saying, "Why don't you give us a book from which prayers can be read by someone else? I feel so shy when called upon to pray before others."

On our festival days and on other occasions, his sweet, humble, and devout-looking face, bedewed with tears and glowing with emotional fervour, was one of the inspiring spectacles to behold. He sat fixed to his seat for hours together, without stirring or showing the least impatience; and when any of my words roused his devotional feeling, he would come up to me after the service was over and clasp me

to his bosom, as a mark of the pleasure he had felt at my words.

He was very shy and reserved, yet to me his dear personal friend, he at times opened his mind. To my complaints that he was over-working himself, made specially during his last days, he would make answer when we two were alone, by squeezing my hand, and whispering in my ears, "Sivnath Babu, Sivnath Babu, I have laid down my life at the feet of God and let me die in His service." Indeed, the inmost secret of his greatness and goodness, and of his multifarious activities, was his desire to lay down his life at the feet of God for His service and the service of his fellow-men. His was a life lived truly to the glory of God and the good of man, the significant aim he has laid down in the constitution of the City College.

I have spoken much about my friend's natural humility and habitual self-effacement, but when occasion demanded he could rise to manly independence and could stick to his sense of right in the face of all opposition ; as was often witnessed at the

meetings of the Senate of the Calcutta University. One significant occasion, when he manifested his sturdy independence, I shall never forget. He was at that time a Member of the Legislative Council of the Government of Bengal. Burmah had been recently annexed, a step he did not approve of. The official party were returning in a special Steamer from Burmah, and seats were reserved for Members of the Lieutenant-Governor's Council, at the Chandpal Ghat, where they were asked to be present, to accord welcome to the returning party. All went except my friend who was conspicuous by his absence. I inquired in to the reason of his non-attendance and had a conversation with him on the annexation, which he heartily deplored. It is a known fact that he never coveted official favour; his heart having been laid, as I have said before, at the feet of God for the service of his fellow-men, regardless of personal loss or gain.

The next thing worthy of mention is our close association in Temperance work. He had jointed the Temperance movement

from the early sixties under the late Peary Charan Sircar. My accession to it was later in 1871 under Mr. Sen. During his visits to England he took an active part in that movement and after his return spurred us on to do something for its promotion. As the President of the Metropolitan Temperance and Purity Association he never lost an opportunity to strengthen the cause.

Such was my friend Ananda Mohan Bose, whose memory is a precious legacy to me, and whom, taking all things together, I consider to have been one of the best of the great and good men I have come across during my life. Oh ! how can I forget that modest piety, that mild and gentle disposition, that forgiving and forbearing temper, that warm-hearted love which it was our pleasure and privilege to see and enjoy for so many years. My friend's whole life was a uniform devotion to noble aims. It was a life laid down at the feet of God, as he had once whispered in my ears.

IV

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF RAMKRISHNA PARAMHANSAS.

MY personal acquaintance with Ramkrishna Paramhansa happened in the following manner. In the year 1875, I was employed as Head Master in the South Suburban School of Bhowanipore, in the southern suburbs of Calcutta. While working there, I formed friendship with a teacher of the London Missionary Society's Institution, who had married at Dakkhineswar, a village in the northern suburbs, the famous seat of Ramkrishna Paramhansa. After his visits to Dakkhineswar my friend would come and relate to me the strange sayings and doings of a Hindu mendicant attached to the temple of the goddess Kali at that place. Some of these sayings seemed so remarkable to me, that one day I accompanied my friend to see him. He was not known to fame then, which came to him afterwards, when the late Brahmananda



RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA.

Keshub Chunder Sen began to visit him and to publish the accounts of his visits in his paper.

I have not kept any notes of our meetings, consequently shall not be able to record things in chronological order, but shall narrate events as they linger in my memory without any special reference to time.

I do not remember the things he said during our first interview, but I vividly recollect that he received me very warmly, perhaps owing to the fact of my name having been mentioned to him by my friend previously. He said to me again and again, in his well-known open-hearted, simple and childlike manner, "I am so delighted to see you, will you come to me now and then?" The little of his personal history that I could gather from persons living there showed that he was an unlettered poor Brahmin, formerly employed as a *Pujari* or ministering priest in the Kali temple, who subsequently, by his extraordinary penances and austerities, had attained to a state of perfection the like of which was seldom seen.

After repeated visits our friendship became

closer and he began to unbosom his experiences to me. The long and short of the story is this—When acting as a priest in the temple, he came in personal contact with many Hindu *Sadhus*, saints, sages and mendicants who, on their way to and from Puri or Jagannath, would visit that temple and would sometimes stay there for stated periods. The personal contact with these men brought on a revolution in Ramkrishna's life. His hunger and thirst for spiritual truth, which was naturally great, was further strengthened. As a result, he devoted himself to the religious exercises which many of them taught, and began to practise austerities that were very severe.

I recollect some of them as related by the saint. The idea that struck him most, and had an abiding influence on his mind, was to avoid as poison "*Kamini kanchan*" or woman and wealth, as the most effective way of ensuring spiritual detachment; and the means that he adopted for that purpose were also very peculiar. With a quantity of dust in one hand, for instance, and some pieces of coin in the other, he

would sit by the side of the river, flowing near by, and then would compose himself into a state of meditation, trying to realize the equal nothingness of both of them, the quantity of dust, and the pieces of coin. Then he would go on repeating "dust is money, money is dust, dust is money, money is dust", and so on, till the realization of that truth was complete, when he would throw both 'money and dust' into the stream.

Similarly, his efforts to rise above the attractions of woman were also very peculiar. I need not recount all of them, which the saint related to me. Suffice it to say that ultimately his abhorrence of the touch of woman became so great that he would not permit, in after years, any woman to approach him within some feet of distance. To one approaching too near he would often bow and say,—“Mother! mother! stay there, please come not nearer.” To my question, what were his apprehensions about the nearer approach of woman, he made the reply, that the shock would be too great for him, he would be simply

overpowered and would faint away. I do not remember having ever seen any woman approaching him too near, with the result of his falling into fits, but I was personally present on occasions when pieces of coin were placed in his hand by an enquiring visitor, as an experiment, and the saint fell into his usual fits, and did not come back to consciousness, until the pieces of coin were removed from the hand.

Some more words about these woman-hunning exercises are needed. As a consequence of them, at the time I first saw him, Ramkrishna was living practically separated from his wife, who was living in her village home. One day finding me complaining to some friends assembled there, about the virtual widowhood of his wife, he drew me to himself and whispered in my ears: "Why do you complain? It is no longer possible, it is all dead and gone." One day finding myself expostulating about this part of his teaching, and also declaring that our programme of work in the Brahmo Samaj includes women, that ours is a social and domestic religion, and

that we want to give education and social liberty to women, the saint got very much excited, as it was his fashion, when anything against his settled conviction was asserted in his presence, a trait we liked so much in him, and exclaimed, "Go thou fool, go and perish in the pit that your women will dig for you." Then he looked with glaring eyes at me and said—"Suppose the case of a gardener who is planting a young plant in his garden. What does he do? Dose he not surround that young plant with a fence, to protect it from being eaten up by goats and cattle? And then when the young plant has grown up into a tree and it can no longer be injured by cattle, does he not remove the fence and let the tree grow freely?" I replied—"Yes, that is the custom with gardeners." Then he remarked—"Do that with regard to your spiritual life; shun women in the beginning of that life, be strong, be full-grown, then you may seek them." To which I replied—"I don't agree with you in thinking that women's work is like that of cattle, only to destroy our spiritual life;

they are our associates and helpers in all our spiritual struggles and social progress,"— a view with which he could not agree and he marked his dissent by shaking his head. Then referring to the closing evening he jocularly remarked ;—"It is time for you to depart ; take care, don't be late, otherwise *your woman* would not admit you into her room". There was a hearty laughter of all present over these remarks.

Besides the woman-shunning exercises, the other modes of exercise, adopted by him were also characteristic. Many of them appeared to us to be quite fanciful and involving needless waste of time and energy. There were certainly better ways for serving the ends he had in view. But we must judge a man by his sincerity and his hunger and thirst for religion. He had earnestly resolved to practise all that the mendicants visiting that temple had dictated. One sage told him, for instance, that the best way of acquiring perfect obedience to the Divine will, was to cultivate the spirit of Hanuman, the famous monkey-servant of Rama, as delineated in the

Ramayana. In order to cultivate that spirit, Ramkrishna, shut himself up in a room for a number of days, meditating on the virtues of Hanuman. He caused an artificial tail to be made, which he put on, to look like a monkey, and then jumped about in the room calling upon God,—“Lord, Lord, I am thy devoted servant.”

Another sage told him to practise humility, to believe himself to be equal to the meanest sweeper, for instance. Ramkrishna at once resolved to do the duty of a sweeper. By stealth he would enter the *paikhana* or privy of a neighbour from below, and would take away the pots to the river to wash them and place them again in their places. This thing went on for some time, till at last it was discovered, and remonstrances were forthcoming, and he had to give up the practice.

Added to all these there were hard regulations about diet and sleep. He fasted for days and denied himself rest during nights. One can easily imagine that these severe austerities told upon his constitution,

which seems to have been naturally frail. The first result was that his health completely broke down and he became a permanent invalid. He got something like a cancer in his throat, of which, I think, he finally died. The other was—he got a strange nervous disorder, under which, whenever there was any strong emotion or excitement, he would faint away, losing his consciousness, for the time being, and his whole countenance assuming a radiant glow, as a mark of the emotion working within. This kind of malady seems to be peculiar to religious persons. It is said of Chaitanya, the far-famed prophet of Bengal, that under strong emotion he would faint away, and his figure would assume such an ethereal glow at the time that men would be struck with wonder and many would kiss his whole frame. It is also said of Mahomet that under deep religious emotion he would fall into a sort of trance, and that many of his utterances given out soon after such a state of trance, have been treasured up in the Koran. Cases have also been known of many saints of Christendom, both

men and women, who would faint away under strong religious emotion: To us; Hindus of Bengal, both in the Brahmō Samaj, and in the Vaishnava community, it is a fact, of repeated experience that men and women faint away during rapturous singing of *sankirtan*. What the latter get occasionally, men like Ramkrishna, Chitanya, and Mahomet got habitually. That he had got the fits from the above mentioned austerities he personally told me one day. Upon my expressing regret for these fits one day, as tending to further weaken his health, he said—"Yes, my friend, that will kill me. I have got it by trying to literally carry out the injunctions of the *sadhus* who visited this temple".

Then his severe austerities led to another result. It brought about mental derangement for some time. This fact is, perhaps, not generally known. But it is a fact; at least he himself told us so on one occasion. Let me describe that occasion. I was seated with him, when a number of rich men from Calcutta arrived. The saint left us in the midst of the conversation and went

out of the room for some minutes. In the meantime Hriday, his nephew and care-taker, began to extol his uncle before these rich men, by narrating some of his great performances. Referring to the above mentioned period of mental derangement, he said, "So great was his love of God, that he became insensible to all outward circumstances of life, for some time, and apparently dead to all external events." Just at that moment the saint was entering the room. He had caught Hriday's last words. Upon his reappearance, he took Hriday to task, for trying to magnify his uncle before others. The saint's words I vividly remember. He said—"What a mean-spirited fellow you must be to extol me thus before these rich men. You have seen their costly apparel and their golden watches and chains, and your object is to extract from them as much money as you can for your uncle. What do I care if these men do not think highly of me?" Then turning to the rich men he said,—“No, my friends, what he has told you about me is not true, it was not love of God that made me absorbed and indif-

ferent to external life ; I became positively insane for some time, The sadhus who frequented this temple, told me to practise many things. I tried to follow them and the consequence was my austerities drove me to insanity." That voice of protest raised Ramkrishna many degrees in my estimation. In fact the impression left in my mind, by intercourse with him, was, that I had seldom come across any other man, in whom the hunger and thirst for spiritual life was so great and who had gone through so many privations and sufferings for the practice of religion. Secondly, I was convinced that he was no longer a *sadhak* or a devotee under exercise, but was a *siddha purusha* or one who had attained direct vision of spiritual truth. The truth of which he had direct spiritual vision, and which had become a fountain of noble impulses in his soul, was Divine Motherhood. He loved to speak of God as his mother, the thought of Divine Motherhood would rouse all his emotions, and he would faint away from excess of excitement when singing of the Mother's love. Yet this conception

of Motherhood stretched far beyond any idol or image into a sense of the Infinite. When he spoke or sang about the Mother, his thoughts far out-stripped the limits of the four-handed goddess Kali. One of his favourite songs was—"Oh mother, dance, once commingling thy smiles and thy flute" —*i.e.* commingling Kali and Krishna. He would often say, only fools make distinction between Kali and Krishna, they are the manifestations of the same Power.

Speaking of the spirituality and catholicity of his conception, one incident comes to my mind. A Christian preacher of Bhowanipore, who was my personal friend, once accompanied me on my visit to Ramkrishna. When I introduced my friend to him, I said—"To-day I bring a Christian preacher to you, who having heard of you from me, was very eager to see you", whereupon the saint bowed his head to the ground and said, "I bow again and again, at the feet of Jesus." Then took place the following conversation:—

My Christian friend—How is it Sir, that you bow at the feet of Christ? What do you think of him?

Ramkrishna—Why, I look upon him as an incarnation of God.

My friend—Incarnation of God ! Will you kindly explain what you mean by it ?

Ramkrishna—An incarnation like our Rama or Krishna. Don't you know there is a passage in the Bhagavat where it is said that the incarnations of Vishnu or the Supreme Being are innumerable ?

My friend—Please explain further ; I do not understand it quite.

Ramkrishna—Just take the case of the ocean. It is a wide and almost infinite expanse of water. But owing to special causes, in special parts of this wide sea, the water becomes congealed into ice. When reduced to ice it can be easily manipulated and applied to special uses. An incarnation is something like that. Like that infinite expanse of water, there is the Infinite Power, immanent in matter and mind, but for some special purposes, in special regions, a portion of that Infinite Power, as it were, assumes a tangible shape in history, that is what you call a great man ; but he is properly speaking a local manifestation of the

all-pervading Divine Power ; in other words, an incarnation of God. The greatness of great men is essentially the manifestation of Divine Energy.

My friend—I understand your position, though we do not quite agree with it. (Then turning to me)—“I should like to know what my Brahma friends would say to this.”

Ramkrishna,—Don't talk of those fools, (meaning members of the Brahma Samaj), they have no eyes to see such things.

Myself—(addressing Ramkrishna) Who told you, Sir, that we do not believe that the greatness of the great teachers of humanity was a Divine communication, and in that sense they were incarnations of a Divine Idea ?

Ramkrishna—Do you really believe it to be so ? I did not know that.

Afterwards there was a conversation during which the saint illustrated, in his wellknown homely way, many spiritual truths which quite struck my Christian friend as something very noteworthy.

After this I kept up visiting the saint whenever I got leisure. Many were the

meetings and many the utterances. I do not remember all of them, and the following are only some of those that still linger in my memory.

On one occasion, I was present in his room along with a few others, who during the saint's temporary absence from the room, began to discuss the reasonableness or otherwise of certain Divine attributes. I was getting tired of the discussion when the saint returned. Whilst entering the room he had caught some words of that discussion and had also observed the heated nature of it. He at once put a stop to the discussion, by saying, "Stop, stop, what is the good of discussing the reasonableness or otherwise of Divine attributes? These things are got by other ways, by prayerfully waiting and thinking. For instance, you say God is good, can you convince me of His goodness by reasoning? Take for instance that mournful incident, the encroachment of the sea on the land, that lately took place at Dakhin Sabazpore, the great inundation during a storm. We hear thousands of men, women and children were carried away and drowned

by that flood. How can you prove to me that a good God, a beneficent Deity, ordered all that? You will perhaps answer by pointing out the attendant good that that flood did; how it carried away filth, how it fertilized the soil and so on. But my question is this, could not a good God do all that without carrying off hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children?" At this point one of the audience interrupted him by saying, Are we then to believe that God was cruel!

Ramkrishna—"Thou fool, who tells you to do that? Join your hands in reverential humility and say—'O God we are too weak and too incompetent to know thy nature and thy doings. Do thou enlighten our understanding.'"

Then he illustrated the truth by the following parable:—"Take the case of two men travelling by a certain road, who take temporary shelter in a mango-grove. It was the season for mangoes. One of them sits with pencil and paper in hand and begins a calculation. He counts the number of mango-trees in the garden, the number of branches.

in each tree and the average number of mangoes on each branch. Then he tries to imagine how many cart-loads of mangoes that garden will supply, and then again taking each cart-load to be worth so many rupces when taken to market, how much money that garden will fetch.

“When one man was employed like this, in counting up the probable income from the garden, the other was engaged in plucking ripe mangoes and eating them. Which of them do you consider to be the wiser of the two?”

“The second one was certainly the wiser,” said the visitor, “for it is certainly wiser to eat the fruits than counting up on paper the probable income from the garden.” Then the saint smiled and remarked :—“It is likewise wiser to pray to God and to cultivate communion with Him, than to argue about the reasonableness or otherwise of his attributes. Pray and open your hearts to Him and the light will come to you.”

On another occasion, when I was seated with him a number of men arrived, one

of whom amongst other questions asked :
 “Whether it was necessary for a man, for
 the purpose of spiritual improvement, to
 place himself under the guidance of some
guru or spiritual preceptor ?”

Ramkrishna replied—“Certainly, it is of
 advantage and a great good fortune for a
 man if he can find a worthy director of his
 spiritual life ; such a one would materially
 help him. Not that he cannot attain to
 true spiritual progress by his self-exertions,
 but such a company would certainly facili-
 tate it.” Then turning to the river flowing
 near by he pointed to a passing steamer,
 and asked his questioner : “When do you
 think that steamer will reach Chinsurah ?”
 The man said—“By five or six in the even-
 ing”. The saint said, “You mark a boat
 attached by a rope to the stern of the
 steamer. With the help of the steamer, that
 boat also will arrive at Chinsurah, by that
 time. But suppose that boat is detached
 from the steamer and has to ply unaided,
 when do you think it would reach that
 place ?” The questioner replied,—“Most
 likely not before next morning”. The saint

concluded ;—“Exactly like that, a man may go on unaided in his spiritual life, through his weaknesses and blunders, it only takes time ; whereas if he can get the advantages of the companionship and help of an advanced spirit he can accomplish the journey of ten or twelve hours in four.”

On another occasion one of the visitors asked—“Of *jnan* or knowledge of God, and *bhakti* or ardent love of God, which is better?” Ramkrishna took advantage of the gender of the words according to Sanskrit grammar, calling *jnan* to be a male and *bhakti* a female. But in this, through his ignorance of Sanskrit grammar he committed a mistake, for *jnan* in Sanskrit is in the neuter gender. However, his application of the Sanskrit grammar in this instance was very striking and peculiar. After describing one to be masculine and the other feminine, and then referring to the Indian custom of shutting up women in the inner apartments, he said—“*Jnan* or knowledge being a male is obliged to stand and wait at the outer court of the Divine Mother’s house, whereas *bhakti* being

female goes direct to the inner apartments, to the very presence of the Mother."

On another occasion one of the visitors asked,—“Living in the world as we do, surrounded by our daily cares and daily duties, what are we to do, to concentrate our attention on Divine things?” To which the saint replied—“Have you ever seen women making *cheerah*? (a kind of boiled and threshed paddy). There is the threshing-machine called *Dhenki*, with its big pestle going up and coming down, in measured movement. A woman generally takes her seat near the small pit made in the ground, where the grain to be threshed is put, and where the pestle rises and falls and, as the pestle rises and falls, she gathers up the threshed corn and removes it to be spread in the sun. She has to be very careful about her hand gathering the threshed corn from the pit, for the least carelessness on her part, would make that pestle come down upon her hand and crush her fingers. Now suppose the case of such a woman, thus employed. Also suppose that woman is at the same time employed

in other ways. She has a baby on her lap to whom she is giving suck, with her left hand she is spreading the threshed corn to the sun, and at the same time is speaking to a neighbour about the price of some *cheera* she had taken sometime ago. Where do you think that woman's attention is primarily directed? Certainly to her hand in the pit, lest that hand be crushed by the down-coming pestle. Similarly in this world be ye occupied with many concerns, and be ye attentive to many duties, but primarily attend to yōur spiritual interests, take care that these are not crushed."

On another occasion the conversation turned upon the usefulness or otherwise of counting beads or repeating the names of gods or goddesses. The saint replied :—"The mere repetition of a name in itself is nothing, unless it is attended by a corresponding spiritual emotion. Take the case of a parrot for instance. Its master has taught it the names of his own deities. Accordingly the parrot is going on repeating in season and out of season, the names of *Radha* and *Krishna*. *Radha Krishna, Radha Krishna*, the

parrot repeats morning and evening, and seems to be quite in love with them. But mark one day the wily cat pounces upon the parrot from behind and tries to kill it. What do you hear then? You perhaps observe that *Radha Krishna* has vanished from its throat, and in its place has come in the frightened and agonised bird's natural cry,—*Kan Kan Kan*. So your bead-counting man, when tempted and tried perhaps forgets the name he repeats, or your professed lover of God forgets his God's name, and falls into his natural mood of unbelief and want of resignation. A faith that cannot stand the trials of life is no faith at all."

Enough : let me now proceed to relate some incidents expressive of the saint's personal affection for me. On one occasion he had been sending repeated messages to me asking me to come and see him ; but I was being detained by Brahma Samaj work, till at last he turned up at my house one day, perhaps on his way to keep some other engagement. Then took place the following conversation.

Ramkrishna—How is it you have not

seen me for so long a time even after repeated requests, and your repeated promises to do so ?

Myself.—The work of the Brahmo Samaj detains me. I am just now very busy.

Ramkrishna—Perish your Brahmo Samaj ! if it denies you liberty to see your friends.

Then looking at my face he smiled and said—“When I was coming to you the fellows (meaning his new disciples) said—‘Why should you go to a Brahmo, he is not worthy of a visit.’ Do you know what I told them ?”

Myself—What did you tell them ?

Ramkrishna—I told them, now look here, I am at the service of all.

On another occasion he had been invited to be present at a Brahmo festival held in a garden-house at Dum Dum. I arrived a little late. Upon my arrival I found him standing and singing in the midst of a crowd of people. As soon as he saw me he clasped me to his bosom, declaring, “Oh ! my bosom is now soothed.” After that his proceedings went on with unusual fervour and enthusiasm.

On a third occasion as I was approaching the temple of Dakkhineswar after a long time, I found the saint in his simple and childlike fashion trying to drive away a number of crows from the adjoining trees, with a bow and arrow in his hands. To find him in that condition was a surprise to me. "What is that? turned an archer?" I exclaimed, whereupon he seemed to be equally surprised to find me coming after a long time and threw away the bow and arrow and ran to my bosom. So great was his delight that he fainted away from excess of emotion. Slowly I took him inside his room, laid him on his bed and waited till he came to consciousness. When able to speak again, he broached to me the proposal of accompanying him to the Zoological Gardens, whither some of his disciples had proposed to take him to see the lions. The manner in which he expressed his joy at the thought of seeing the lions, was charming in its simplicity. He repeatedly asked me, did I not like to see the lions, the celebrated riding-beasts of goddess Durga? —I smiled and said, "I have seen the lions

several times." To which he replied—"Is it not a pleasure to accompany me to see them once more?" I said, "Yes, it is a great pleasure, no doubt, but, unfortunately, I have another engagement to attend to. I shall, however, accompany you down to the Sukea Street crossing in Calcutta, and then shall send for Naren (subsequently known as Vivekananda, who was then employed as a teacher in the Metropolitan Institution) from his school and he will take you to the Zoological Gardens."

At last it was so arranged, and a carriage was brought by a young disciple, who, as far as I remember, became our fellow-passenger in the carriage. But while in the carriage, Ramkrishna insisted upon sitting on my left-hand side on the seat. I could not at first understand his meaning. But as the carriage started he covered his head with his *chudder* or covering sheet, in the fashion of young married women of Bengal. I asked for the reason of his so doing. He said, "Don't you see I am a woman for the time being. I am travelling with my lover." Saying this he threw his

arm around my waist and began to make a sort of dancing movement, seated as he was, as a mark of his great pleasure. At this point there came on his fit or trance, and then I witnessed a scene that I shall never forget. His whole countenance was aglow with a strange spiritual light, and before he became fully unconscious, he began to pray with incoherent words, in the following fashion—"O Mother, my beloved Mother, do not make me unconscious. O Mother! I am going to see the lions in the Zoological Gardens. O Mother. I may have a fall from the carriage. Do, do let me be all right till the journey is finished." At this point he became thoroughly unconscious, leaning on my arm for some minutes. After consciousness had returned he once more began conversation in his usual childlike and simple manner, till we reached the Sukea Street crossing and Naren was sent for. He came at once, as far as I remember, and took my place in the carriage and took his master to the Gardens. It should be mentioned here that the Metropolitan Institution was at

that time situated in Sukea Street.

During the last few years of the saint's life, my visits became less frequent than they were before. Two causes contributed to produce that result. First, latterly, through his childlike simplicity he was drawn away by some of his new disciples, into encouraging by his visits and friendship, many objectionable characters such as the actors of the Indian theatres. I did not like to be associated with such men.

Secondly, during his last days, some of his new disciples began to preach him as God Almighty. I was afraid my meeting with such men would give rise to unpleasant discussions. So I kept away. At last when the news of his fast declining health was brought to me one day, I left all work and went to Dakkhineswar. I found him very low. That was before his final removal to a more commodious house on the river-side for treatment. Ramkrishna took me to task for neglecting him. I pleaded guilty to the charge and made a clean breast of it by letting him know the exact causes. I smiled and said,—“As there are many

editions of a book, so there have been many editions of God Almighty and your disciples are about to make you a new one." He too smiled and said—"Just fancy, God Almighty dying of a cancer in the throat. What great fools these fellows must be!"

That was my last interview with him, after which he was removed from Dakkhineswar, was placed under the treatment of the most distinguished physicians of the town, and was devotedly nursed by his disciples; but nothing could stay the progress of his disease and he passed away, leaving behind him a memory that is now spiritually feeding hundreds of earnest souls. My acquaintance with him, though short, was fruitful by strengthening many a spiritual thought in me. I owe him a debt of gratitude for the sincere affection he bore towards me. He was certainly one of the most remarkable personalities I have come across in life.



MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE.

V

THE PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF MAHARSHI DEVENDRA NATH TAGORE.

IN using the title Maharshi before the name of the great Brahma leader, I am conscious that I am exposing myself to the sneers and taunts of some outside critics who do not see the propriety of using such a title before his name. What has Devendra Nath done, say they, to deserve such a high title? To them my reply is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, if any man in modern India deserves the title of *rishi* or spiritual seer it is certainly Devendra Nath Tagore. And inasmuch as his seer-ship, if such an expression is allowable; consisted of the loftiest and purest vision of the Supreme Truth, he can justly be regarded as the Maharshi or great seer of the age. However, that is a matter of individual opinion with which men may not agree, and I leave them to their conclusion, clinging

to the title of honour which the members of the Brahma Samaj have conferred upon him.

In commencing my reminiscences I must once more ask the reader to look to other sources of information for the facts and incidents of his remarkable life, and specially to his wonderful autobiography, in which is recorded his spiritual history. My object is not to present a connected account of that life, but only to record such facts and incidents as linger in my memory.

I do not recollect the exact time when I was introduced to the venerable sage, nor by whom. It could not have been earlier than 1865 or 1866, when I began to feel earnestly about religion and was attracted towards the Brahma Samaj, and the introduction must have taken place through my late cousin Pandit Hem Chandra Vidyaratna, formerly one of the translators of the Mahabharat under Kali Prasanna Singh, and latterly the editor of the Tattwabodhini Patrika.

But long before that I had heard of the great leader of Brahmaism from my

father, who is a warm admirer of him from the days of his great renunciation, in 1846, after the death of his father in England in that year. My father, who is an orthodox pandit, says even now, that during the long course of his experience he has known few other men who were so *fearlessly honest* and so *scrupulously truthful* in their dealings with others, as Devendra Nath Tagore. That warm admiration of my father had taught me to honour the sage's name, from early boyhood, which sentiment was further strengthened by what a number of Brahma young men of my village said about him.

I grew up with the notion that he was one of the truly great men of Bengal. After this when residing at Bhowanipore during the years 1861 to 1865, I was drawn, on several occasions, to meetings held in the local Brahma Samaj, when the expected visits of Devendra Nath would be announced. On all such occasions his venerable appearance, as well as his inspiring utterances, would excite my admiration, and fill my heart with a warm regard. But that

warm regard did not lead to formal connection with his movement till 1865 or 1866. It was at that time that religious consciousness was awakened in me and I began an earnest search for spiritual truth. When I opened my mind to my late cousin Hem Chandra Vidyaratna, he gave me a warm reception and began to take me to the services of the Brahma Samaj, and must have introduced me to the revered leader. I approached him with a reverent spirit and the eagerness of a loving disciple ; and my expectations were more than fulfilled by what I saw and heard.

I do not exactly recollect what transpired at the first meeting. Nor was it followed by other meetings, within a pretty long time. He seemed to be too high for me, a boy of eighteen or nineteen at that time, to be troubled by frequent visits, and I kept away from him, admiring from a distance and feeding on his words. Besides after the schism of 1866 he began to keep away from Calcutta for long intervals, spending his time on the hills and in other lonely places, in giving himself to

thought, study, meditation and prayer. The schism had given such a shock to his feeling that thenceforth he ceased taking an active part in Samaj work, leaving its management to his children and friends, and spending much of his time in solitude and silent communion. Consequently though introduced to him I had no special personal contact with him for several years.

Up to 1868 my sympathies were rather with the Adi Brahma Samaj than with the Brahma Samaj of India of Keshub Chunder Sen. One reason for this was, perhaps, the attitude of hostility that my uncle Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, the editor of the *Somaprakash*, assumed in his paper against the progressive party for their introduction of the practice of *sankirtan* in Vaishnava fashion, in their religious gatherings from 1867. Born in a *Shakta* family, accustomed to *Shakti* worship from childhood, I had an inborn repugnance to the Vaishnava *khōl* and *kartal*, the musical instruments of *sankirtan*. My uncle strengthened that prejudice and made me shun the progressives in disgust. The influence.

of my cousin Hem Chandra Vidyaratna on my mind also seems to have been predominant.

A change came upon me in that respect, when in 1868 my friend and class-fellow Bijoy Krishna Goswami, a missionary of Mr. Sen's party, drew me into that section of the Samaj. I was initiated by Mr. Sen into Brahmoism in August 1869 on the occasion of the consecration of his Mandir. Strangely enough my relationship with Devendra Nath became closer after that event. In spite of the fact that I had gone over to the opposite camp, he received me warmly and began to unfold to me his spiritual experiences. They are certainly very wonderful to relate. The following is the story of his conversion as related by him. As a boy he had been brought up by his grand-mother, whose influence on his life and character was very great. Under her care he became a staunch believer in idolatry, so much so, that every morning he would bow before the *Siddheswari Kali*, of Thunthunia, on his way to school, to have her blessings in the matter of his class

lessons. But quite unexpectedly there came a change. The silent observation of the stars one evening filled his mind with wonder and impressed it with the thought that the grand universe he saw before him could not have proceeded from any finite being. This thought, though momentary, was sufficient to disturb his old notions. After this the hold of the traditional ideas on his mind was weakened. An event happened within a short time which landed him in another conviction.

His grand-mother died and he had to accompany her corpse to the cremation ground. Whilst seated there he was for the first time in his life face to face with the vanity of worldly pleasures. As the son of Dwaraka Nath Tagore, a rich and influential citizen, he had been brought up in the lap of luxury and ease, and as the first-born of the house was daily courted by the numerous visitors, suitors, parasites and priests who frequented that house. He had never witnessed ere this a scene like the one in the midst of which he was on that occasion placed. In the cremation ground

he found his friends and relations seated on a bare mat, and smoking from the ordinary poor man's *hookka* made of a cocoanut shell. The contrast struck him, and, as its first effect, filled his mind with a sense of void; in the midst of which he fell into deep musings. From these musings his soul was roused and flooded with a kind of unutterable ethereal joy by the vision of a Reality that far out-weighed all worldly pomp and power. This he described to me as *man-ananda* or mental bliss never experienced before. He returned home with that ethereal joy and so great was his absorption and his rapture, that he not only rose above all pangs of sorrow consequent upon the loss of his grand-mother, but he considered that inward vision more real and more valuable than all the wealth by which he was living surrounded. His joy was so great that where people saw only darkness in a room after nightfall, he beheld light.

But for some cause which he could not discover, this glorious vision was, in a short time, withdrawn from his sight, filling his mind with deep despondency. Then

commenced a period of earnest longing and anxious search. His misery was very great. He neglected his ordinary daily avocations; shunned the company of his friends; shut himself up in his room, lying motionless on a couch or moving to and fro for hours together. In this state his agony and his absorption were so great that he forgot to take note of events. He was called away for instance, for his breakfast or dinner while lying in his couch. He went and took his meals and returned and lay on the couch as before; but after two or three hours he asked a passing servant, why they had not called him to his meals. In this state of extreme misery he would at times fly from Calcutta to the Botanical Gardens, to spend a day in solitude. Whilst there his agony at times was so great that he saw darkness instead of light in the rays of the mid-day sun.

Whilst thus occupied and pacing up and down in the veranda of his house he noticed one day the stray leaf of some book flying past him, carried forward by the wind. He stooped and picked it up; tried to read but

could not, because it was written in the Sanskrit language with which he was till then unacquainted. Those who knew better advised him to apply for explanation to Pandit Ram Chandra Vidyabagish, the minister of the Brahma Samaj. With the latter's help that leaf was found to contain the opening verse of the *Ishopnishad* which says :—

“The Supreme Being is immanent in all that lives and moves in this world ; enjoy therefore without being attached ; covet not wealth belonging to others.”

When apprised of the meaning of this passage young Devendra Nath took that to be a message for himself. He laid it to his heart and began to ponder over it day and night. That properly speaking was the commencement of his spiritual life.

The Maharshi told me that he had made that message the principal help of his life-long *sadhan* or spiritual exercise. First, he had tried to realize the immanence of the Supreme Being in matter and mind ; secondly, he had tried to live detached in the midst of his wealth ; thirdly, he had

never coveted wealth belonging to others. And his actual life also bore living testimony to the progress he had attained in these respects. After this he founded the *Tattwabodhini Sabha* and was initiated into Brahmoism By Pandit Ram Chandra Vidya-bagish, the minister appointed by Rajah Ram Mohon Roy, in 1843. How faithfully he tried to carry out the principles stated in the above passage, will be best manifest from the following description of the manner in which he tried to keep faithful to one of its teachings—namely, *covet not wealth belonging to others*. His father the late Dwaraka Nath Tagore died in England in the year 1846 leaving behind him debts amounting nearly to a crore of Rupees. But previous to his death he had set apart as trust property a sufficiently large portion of his estates for the maintenance of his family. Now came the question, what was Devendra Nath to do to satisfy the claims of his father's creditors. To him it was a palpable truth that in the presence of such immense debts all the property that still belonged to the family was *wealth belonging to others*. How

could he covet all that in the face of the message received by him on the day of his conversion? It was the greatest of problems to him during that period.

As he slowly worked up towards the decision to place all the property left by his father at the disposal of the latter's creditors, he was face to face with a tremendous difficulty. His uncle the late Roma Nath Tagore, as well as all the other members of his family, were dread opposed to the idea of placing, all his property in the hands of his father's creditors. Before he made out a correct list of all property both movable and immovable left by his father and placed the same before a Court of Justice for disposal by his creditors, there went on interminable discussions and dissensions in the family circle, to prevent such a catastrophe. He remained firm, the message conveyed to him on the day of his conversion crying to his ears—*covet not wealth belonging to others*. At last the eventful day arrived—he must go to Court to place the list before the Judge and his creditors. Fortunately his own brothers supported him in this

heroic act. With the list in his pocket and accompanied by his brothers, as he issued out of the inner apartments of his house, after breakfast, on the appointed day, there was loud wailing inside the house, raised by the female inmates, as if some one was dead. They were afraid of being shorn of all dignity and honour in process of time and of descending into abject poverty from a position of affluence and ease. As the ladies of the house were thus rending the skies with their cries, Babu Roma Nath Tagore, who had called sometime before, to try his final appeal on his nephews, gnashed his teeth in rage, and drove away from the house, with stern injunctions never to molest him any more about the internal affairs of the family.

One can easily imagine the condition of Devendra Nath at that critical moment. I relate it as he described it to me. The situation was too painful for him to reflect upon. At that critical moment, from man he turned to God, and prayerfully resigned himself to Divine guidance, choosing to do the right thing, leaving the consequences

in the hands of God. Earnest prayer brought him strength, he felt some power within him which lifted him above all selfish calculations. Calm and majestic, serene and undistracted, he approached the Judge and presented his list. The effect was instantaneous and electric. The Judge admired him and recommended him to his creditors for consideration; one of whom was so far over-powered that he began to sob like a little child.

Moved by his courage and uprightness his creditors refused to put up his estates to auction, and forthwith entered upon an understanding with him, which he faithfully kept through a long course of years till every rupee of his father's debts had been paid; so much so that the lakh of Rupees, which his father had promised as donation to the District Charitable Society at the time of its foundation, and of which the latter gave up all hopes after his death, was paid with interest accumulating from the day of his father's signature. One cannot forget the thankfulness and joy which lighted up the eyes of the old sage as he related the story to us.

How he acted up to another part of the message received on the day of his conversion is also significant. A part of that message was to try to realize the presence of the Supreme Being immanent in matter and mind. How he endeavoured to realize this truth, he has tried to relate in his wonderful autobiography, which I recommend to all Bengali readers, which they will certainly read with pleasure and profit, even merely as a literary study ; for that book is fit to be classed amongst the remarkable literary productions of the age.

Properly speaking the realization of the truth of the inmanence of the Supreme Being in matter and mind furnishes the key to the spiritual life of the sage. For that he staked every thing and on that his spirit fed throughout his life. Silent meditation became the habit of his nature and he loved to dwell in solitude. Even in the crowded city of Calcutta, in his house, situated in one of the most crowded parts of it, he would be shut up for hours upon hours in his study riveted to his seat, lost in contemplation, with servants posted at the door, with strict

orders not to allow any one to have an access to him. And so that he might gain opportunities for silent meditation, he would constantly retire from Calcutta for months and years, spending his time in inaccessible parts of hills or forests, or in boats in the large rivers.

As far as I have been able to understand after repeated conferences with him, the thing that formed the secret of his spiritual life, from which he drew his spiritual sustenance, and by which he always regulated his conduct, was contained in the three words *Brahmajnan*, *Brahmadhyan* and *Brahmanandarasapan*, *i.e.*, (1) to be deep in the knowledge of the Infinite, (2) to meditate on the nature and the presence of the Infinite, (3) to be steeped in the joy of communion with the Infinite. These words he always loved to repeat and to enforce on our attention. His aim in life was to be always steeped in the joy of communion. Anything that promoted that joy he hailed as a blessing and anything that clouded it he shunned as poison. Nay even the ordinary daily duties of life he

tried to judge by that one question,—will it promote or mar that joy of communion? Purity and peace of conscience he sought because he had found such purity and peace to be essential conditions of that joy of communion. His love of solitude was also due to his desire for that joy of communion. He found solitude favourable for devotional exercise and the close examination of spiritual truth, and also for meditation and communion. How far the sense of the presence of the Supreme Being in the soul became habitual with him will be best shown by the narration of a few incidents, which were related to me by him and of some of which I was a personal witness. Some of them will show that his habit clung to him not only in moments of health and comfort, but also during moments of disease and prostration. The earnestness and constancy, the faithfulness to his inward light, that were visible during the great struggle that followed the death of his father, were the distinguishing features of his character throughout his life and in almost every case they sprung from the same source, his

fidelity to the indwelling presence. How that indwelling presence surrounded his soul in all moments, how it engrossed his thoughts and coloured his dreams, I shall now proceed to relate.

On one occasion he had retired to the Murree hills, in the Panjab. I am relating it as I heard it from him. On that occasion he had purposely taken very few servants with him and had selected a lonely and retired spot on the hills, to be free from molestation. The servants looked after his immediate wants, and were told to leave him alone at all hours. He had two main occupations : first, to wander about in the solitary by-paths of the hill feeding his eyes with natural beauty and communing with the Divine Presence ; secondly, to sit in his room for hours upon hours, lost in devotional study and in thought and meditation. Whilst thus employed his health unexpectedly gave way and he was laid up with fever. His illness in the course of a few days became very serious and his servants did not know what to do and where to look for aid. In their anxiety they wanted to run to some

city in the plains, to call in a doctor; but he had issued strict orders never to disturb themselves. At last the symptoms became so serious that he himself began to apprehend the worst consequences. His condition was too low to enable him to stir from his bed. With closed eyes he lay stretched on his bed and hourly expected to depart. But strange to say even his hard breathing he converted into a means of spiritual communion. He had sufficient consciousness to feel life ebbing away and his mind was steeped in a sense of the Divine presence. Then happened a curious state of things. He directed his attention to the process of exhalation and inhalation going on. With every breath that he exhaled he silently uttered, "*Tumi*" or "Thou art" and with every breath he inhaled he heard, as it were a voice calling "*Ami*" or "I am". This "Thou art" and "I am" went on with every breath, till he lost all sense of his malady and the voice came to him—"thou shalt yet live, for there is work for thee." Soon after he revived, asked his servants to hold him up in his bed, where he sat up and began to repeat

passages from the *Upanishads*, his whole soul melting away in loving communion with the Supreme.

He had seldom experienced such ethereal bliss in his life, he said. A similar incident happened some years before his death. It occurred at Chinsurah, where he was residing for sometime. The condition of his health was so bad at that time that for a number of days we were daily expecting to hear the fatal news. A large number of Brahmans from Calcutta, both men and women, assembled in the yard of his house one afternoon to present to him what they considered to be their farewell address. He was carried to the meeting on servant's shoulders and gave us his parting blessings. After that men went on calling from Calcutta at the Chinsurah house every day to inquire how he was. One evening his case became so serious that the attending physician left with the injunction to keep the closest watch over him for that night, which, to all appearance, seemed to be the last night of his life. Hour after hour passed in anxious watching; he was lying low

apparently unconscious, but inwardly engaged in rapt spiritual communion, as it came to be known to have been the case afterwards. To the wonder of all in the midst of his rapt communion he looked up and wanted to be lifted up in his bed. He sat up as if nothing had happened, and in a short time after dictated some lines for transmission to me. Those lines told me of the ethereal bliss that he felt when lying low.

Just think of the habitual spiritual disposition of that soul, to which even serious illness was a steppingstone to loving communion with the Supreme. Indeed, silent communion was a passion with him. To that he bent all his efforts. There was a memorable instance when that fact was brought very prominently to my notice. At the invitation of the late Babu Shib Chunder Deb of Konnagore a number of Brahmós had gone to his village house to take part in the anniversary festival of the local Samaj. I was one of the party. In the evening we were expecting Maharshi Devendra Nath to come and conduct the

service. He came in due time accompanied by Dwijendra Nath, his eldest son, and by the late Babu Rajnarain Bose.

After the service and the love-feast that followed when Devendra Nath got ready for departure, his companion Rajnarain Bose stole away from his presence and lying down by my side in my bed whispered in my ears asking me to go to Maharshi and get him discharged from the engagement to accompany him on his return journey. I did so, I went up to Devendra Nath and asked for his permission to allow Rajnarain Babu to stay with us for the night.

When the father and the son had left, Rajnarain Babu related to us the manner in which they had come, to Konnagar. From Calcutta to Konnagar, it was the journey of a few hours only by boat ; yet Devendra Nath had started in the boat, after breakfast, the day before, that is, Saturday. Within an hour or so after starting, there came the order to the boatmen to stop and Maharshi closed his eyes for communion and spent hours in prayer and meditation. The whole night was spent by the side of a

garden house, where the sage spent hours upon hours in solitary meditation. The whole of next day was also spent at that slow rate of progress, intermingling pleasant conversation with the two companions, with hours of silent meditation. One can easily fancy how very tiresome it must have been, to wait speechless for hours together, to his two companions, who were wellknown amongst their friends for their joviality and good humour. After the first two days' experiment. Rajnarain Babu had no disposition to repeat it.

The sage's passion for solitary meditation was so great that when thus disposed he would not permit even his best friends, or persons whom he truly loved to be with him. On another occasion it had been arranged that Maharshi Devendra Nath would preside at a meeting in the Konnagar Samaj, where I was the speaker. He came in time to perform the function. After the meeting I accompanied him to his boat, where he quietly took his seat on the roofing of the boat and I sat by his side. It was nightfall and the beautiful full moon was

rising in the east flooding the waves of the river with melted silver. The scenery was calm and beautiful. I was longing to listen to words of wisdom falling from his lips. But he was otherwise disposed. His soul was longing for solitude and silent meditation. In a few minutes he stopped the conversation and asked me to leave him alone. I silently withdrew from his presence.

On another occasion my late friend Ananda Mohan Bose and myself paid a visit to the *Santi-Niketan* at Bolpore, where the sage was then residing. After dinner in the evening we naturally wished to spend some time in his company, but he ordered us to leave him alone and go downstairs to our bed chamber. We did so. It was a beautiful moonlight night. We sat talking for a long time and then retired to our beds. All that time the Maharshi was walking alone on the upper veranda before his room. At about 2 or 3 A.M. I woke up and roused my friend from his sleep, to enjoy together a walk in the garden in that beautiful moonlight. To our great surprise we found

Devendra Nath walking to and fro on the veranda even at that late hour of the night.

It was his habit to ponder over for hours together spiritual truths, that he came across, in reading some saying of some great teacher or some passage of some book, or that occurred to him during moments of reflection, diving deep beneath the surface, and trying to fathom the depth of meaning hidden under them till the whole thing was clear to his spiritual vision and he realized their importance in the presence of the Supreme Being. Thus meditation fed and strengthened his soul and wonderfully brightened his spiritual vision. After that the realization of those spiritual truths was so vivid and so real that his whole nature, nay even his whole frame, would be roused up as it were, when repeating or expounding those truths. . . Once on the Himalayan hills, when repeating a well-known passage of the Upanishads to me, where the Supreme Being is described as *Satyam* or the Truth, his whole countenance became aglow with emotion and the hairs of his head stood

on their ends. I beheld him with wonder and amazement. Finding me thus looking at him he said, "You daily utter these words, and they have become old things to you, but you do not know what unfathomable depths I realize in them. I have no words to express all that I feel." On another occasion he was expounding to me a passage of Hafiz the Persian poet. So great were his absorption and his rapture that he got up from his seat and exclaimed "I am unconsciously Hafiz himself. This peculiar dress of mine I wear to be nearer to Hafiz." One day I devoutly uttered in his presence a familiar spiritual truth giving my exposition of it. His joy was so great that he suddenly rose from his seat, clasped me to his bosom and exclaimed, "Whoever can say such a thing makes me his slave thereby." Let the reader just fancy the deep emotion of which such an exclamation is proof.

Indeed, his spiritual vision was deep and unfathomable. Shortly before his death he told me one day, "My case is like that of a man who has launched into the sea, but has

no sight of the shore on the otherside ;— new truths are dawning before me, which I know no words to adequately express.”

As he laid great insistence on meditation and communion, he attached equally great importance to the cultivation of the habit of daily devotion. In all seasons and all climes, unless positively incapacitated by illness, he was seen daily devoting the first hours of the morning to thanksgiving and prayer. Even on the day before his death, mistaking the evening hours for the morning through failure of his eye-sight, he caused himself to be carried to the terrace of his house, on his couch, to perform his morning devotions before the rising sun, as he supposed.

He always pressed on our attention the duty and necessity of domestic devotion. He had set apart the Durgapujah Hall of his house as a domestic chapel where he would make the members of his family daily assemble for the worship of the One True God. On one occasion he asked me if I had made it a rule in my family for its members to daily assemble for prayer. When I told

I am that in our family there was such a rule and we considered it wrong to live in the world and to enjoy all its blessings without thanking the Hand from which they came, the venerable sage was so far moved that he sprang up from his seat, clasped me to his bosom and said—"You are doing my work, you are doing my work." Alas! what words of mine can express the depth of that sentiment! He was a true worshipper of the Supreme Being! To him religion was a living reality. His spirit as naturally moved in it as birds fly in the air or as fishes move in the sea. To him to breathe was to live in God. I must stop here today, taking up his other traits in the next article.

I have already spoken of the importance that Maharshi Devendra Nath attached to the cultivation of a habit of daily devotion by his followers. The following incident is an instance in point.

On one occasion, perhaps sometime after 1880, he was residing at Darjeeling, when during one of my tours I arrived there. I waited upon him as usual. In

course of the conversation that took place he said :—

“I am surprised to learn that there are Brahmos who do not worship the Supreme *Purusha* (Person) daily.”

Myself—It should be no matter for surprise to you ; there are many members of the Brahma Samaj who do not pray daily. It is a matter for regret no doubt, but it is a fact.

Maharshi—Why do they call themselves Brahmos then ? It is plainly unjustifiable. Don't you see a Shakta is one who worships Shakti ; a Shaiva is one who worships Shiva ; a Vaishnava is one who worships Vishnu ; similarly a Brahma is one who worships Brahma. Our right to the name Brahma arises from the fact of our being the worshippers of the Supreme Being. How is it that such members of the Samaj attach so little importance to the vow they have taken by declaring themselves as Brahmos ? Take for instance my case. In 1843 when I was initiated by Pandit Ram Chandra Vidyabagish, one part of the covenant I signed was, that I should daily worship the

One True God, by the *gāyatrī mantra*.* That vow I have kept all along. I do not let a single day pass, unless incapacitated by illness or some other cause, without worshipping the *Paramā Pitrūshā* (Supreme Person), by the *gāyatrī mantra*. In subsequent years I have not enforced the *gayatrī* on others; because I found it would not suit the altered times but so far as I myself am concerned I have kept to the habit as a fulfilment of my vow. Brahmos should fulfil the vow they have taken by their public declaration.

He concluded by advising me to enforce the duty of daily worship of the Supreme Being, on all members of the Brahmo Samaj, in the sermon that I was going to preach from the pulpit of the Darjeeling Brahmo Samaj next Sunday. I did so, and I was surprised to find that the old father had

*Considered the holiest verse of the Vedas. It has been thus paraphrased by Sir William Jones:—

“Let us adore the supremacy of that divine sun, the god-head, who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed; to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat.”

sent one of his personal attendants to take notes of my sermon. When I approached him next day he gave me his benediction for having forcibly placed the truth before the congregation.

At Darjeeling he would go out every morning for a quiet walk in some unfrequented parts of the hills ; and at times I would loiter about in those parts, unsuspected by him, to see how he spent his time there. Often I found him, standing enraptured in thought, or walking to and fro in a retired spot lost in meditation and prayer for hours together.

The sense of the Divine presence was so habitual with him that he transacted the minutest duties of life in that light. Haste and hurry were repugnant to him. During the anniversary festival of the Brahma Samaj, we would at times get up meetings of the three sections of the Brahma Samaj in his house. I would be deputed by my friends on these occasions to welcome him and ask for his permission to hold such meetings in his house. He would gladly hail us to such united meetings there ; but

then it was always necessary to give him some time before he came to a final decision. He would always say, "let me have time. I shall finally let you know my decision on such and such a day." Then he would spend the interval (as I learnt from his personal attendants, and also from the members of his family) in prayerfully revolving the whole question in his mind, trying to form a complete picture of the whole affair, as it were, apportioning particular duties in connection with the gathering to particular individuals of his family circle and after having arrived at a decision he would call the members of his household and communicate to them their apportioned duties, telling them that he longed to see that no part of those duties was neglected. Thus by the time I made the second call the whole plan was ready to its minutest parts, and he gave his willing consent.

That was his habit of doing things. He decided every question in the light of earnest communion. On the occasion of the consecration of his *Santi-Niketan*, the garden-house at Bolpore, as a public trust, a few

years before his death, he sent for me nearly a month before the ceremony and asked me to take part in the proceedings. I was asked to deliver a short address on the principles of natural theism after divine service in the morning. I gladly consented to do so. But upon further thought after returning home, it struck me that such an address would suit best the evening hours between five and six, when the people from the surrounding villages would naturally flock in large numbers, whereas in the morning the audience would be necessarily small, and the hour after the service would be unsuited for another discourse. After having come to such a decision I waited upon him again within a few days and suggested to him the proposed change of the programme. He reflected for a while with closed eyes apparently composed in prayer, and then to my great surprise shook his head as a mark of his disagreement to my proposal. One can easily fancy how great was my wonder to find the speaker's own proposal quietly set aside. The reason perhaps was that he had arranged the whole programme in his

moment of spiritual communion, and then to change a part of it, meant the disturbance of his whole plan, which was a too arduous undertaking for him. So he refused to comply with my wishes. Knowing his nature well I at once made up my mind not to give him that trouble and gave my word to observe the programme as it was.

Another incident characteristic of his habit of transacting every duty in the light of the Divine presence, was related to me by Pandit Priya Nath Sastri, his personal attendant for many years. On one occasion there arose some important but unpleasant question relating to the joint property belonging to his own family and that of his late brother. The Mahārshi called his grand-nephews as well as his own children to his presence and advised them to submit that question to the arbitration of some well-known lawyer and decide it once for all by embodying the arbitrator's decision in a legal document. His grand-nephews, who had very great respect for him, entreated him to take up the vexed question in his own hands and give his decision for the

settlement of the dispute once for all. Finding them disposed to place their entire confidence in him, he agreed to play the arbitrator, and dismissed them with the promise of doing that duty. For a few days after this, he shut himself up in his room, praying and poring over the estate papers, not admitting into his presence even his personal attendant, or even his close friends. After meditation and prayer, and the close examination of the whole question from all sides he came to a final decision on the vexed points and once more called his grand-nephews and his children to his presence to announce to them that decision. The decision was so satisfactory to his grand-nephews that they expressed their gratitude for it, and consented to act according to it. Thus an unpleasant question was decided once for all. In this way he tried to view every question of duty in the light of spiritual communion and made it a part of his spiritual exercise.

Another significant trait of his character was his habitual disposition to find in the beauty of Nature and of art an aid to his

spiritual communion. His aesthetic faculty was highly developed. He was a lover of poetry. His passionate regard for the Persian poet Hafiz, I have already noticed. Of the hymns composed by Satyendranath, his second son, and of the poetry of Rabindranath, his youngest son, he was a warm admirer. He would at times repeat to us passages from their poetry, as a mark of his approbation. One day at Darjeeling he showed me a copy of the *Bharati*, the monthly journal issued from his house, in which there was a piece of poetry written by one of his daughters. On the margin I noticed a pencil note by him, addressed to the writer, to the effect—"May a shower of flowers fall on your hands." His delight in that piece was so great. To my inquiry what was that pencil note meant for, he said, that the copy with the note would be sent to Calcutta for circulation amongst his children. There were other notes also on other articles for their use. Thus the development of the poetical talent of his family was largely due to his fostering care. All his personal friends knew that he

had always an eye on the *shobhana* and *sundara* or the beautiful. He would not accept from them any present that was unseemly and disgusting to the eyes. On festive occasions in his house, he would personally supervise the decorations to see that everything was aesthetically perfect. He loved to look on flowers; so they were always kept on his table. On one occasion some young ladies accompanied me to see him. He was delighted to see them, smiled and said, "you have come to see me with a bunch of flowers. Their fragrance fills the room." In connection with this part of his nature one characteristic incident reported to us by members of his household seems to be worth relating. Once a little picture drawn by one of his daughters-in-law came to his notice. He was so pleased with it, that he at once called her to his presence, expressed his great pleasure at her performance, and at once engaged the services of a painter to teach her that art. She became a good painter in course of time. He had a refined taste for the musical art also, and took care to develop it in his family; so

much so that the children of that house lisped in music so to say. Even now large numbers of the citizens of Calcutta flock to the celebration of the anniversary festival of the Brahma Samaj in his house, largely to regale themselves with the musical concert which forms a part of its programme.

Maharshi Devendra Nath is generally known to the outside public as a saint mainly concerned with devotional studies. Very few people know how varied and vast were his general studies, and how many-sided was his culture. Whether in his own house in Calcutta, or on the hill-tops during his residence there, he was found taking note of the general progress of thought in the world, and trying to master the new problems by earnest study. I have already spoken of the visit of my late friend Ananda-Mohan Bose and myself, to Maharshi's *Santi-Niketan* at Bolpore. During that visit after breakfast one morning, as we came to Maharshi's sitting room, we found on his table a well-known work on geology which had been highly spoken of in the public press. It was evident that the old father

was engaged in its study. We had no idea up to that time that he took special interest in geology; and we were naturally surprised to find him spending his time at that advanced age in its study. As we were talking on the matter the Maharshi returned. Then took place the following conversation between him and Ananda Mohan.

Ananda Mohan—We have read of this book in the papers. It is highly spoken of. Are you engaged in its study?

Maharshi—Yes, I am studying it. The newspaper reviews aroused my curiosity and I got a copy for perusal.

Ananda Mohan—(With some degree of surprise). You studying geology during your residence in this solitary abode!

Maharshi—Why Ananda Mohan, what is there to be startled at? Is geology unfit for study? Don't you know I am something of an authority on questions of geology? During my long residence on the hills I have made geology a special subject of study. I love the science; I am immensely interested in its development and progress.

Ananda Mohan—We did not know that.

We are delighted to find you so agreeably and usefully employed.

Maharshi—(With smiles on his countenance). The time is coming for this vessel of mine (meaning his life) to start for some other shore, and I am anxious to store up as much cargo as I can possibly take with me.

On another occasion when Mrs. Humphrey Ward's "Journal of Amiel" had just come out, and was noticed in the papers, I hastened to secure a copy, to earn the credit of being its first reader amongst educated Bengalis in Calcutta. After having done so, I flattered myself with the notion that I was its first reader. But soon after when I approached the Maharshi one day, the first question he asked me was, "Have you read the Journal of Amiel"? He was delighted to find that I had done so. Then he went on repeating from memory some of its remarkable passages, thereby proving that he had not only read the book before that but had studied it carefully.

On another occasion he was staying at Darjeeling. I called on him and he asked me whether I had read a piece of poetry

by Tennyson which had appeared in the previous month's *Nineteenth Century*. Coming to know that I had not done so, he recommended that piece to me, and advised me to keep close touch with the progressive thought of the civilized races.

It is worthy of mention in this connection that he has bequeathed to the *Santi-Niketan* library the works of Kant, Fichte, Descartes, Victor Cousin, J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer, &c., many of the books bearing his pencil notes. He was well-read in ancient and modern philosophy. Then there was another noticeable trait of his character. He lived in a high altitude of dignified manhood in the midst of all our party conflicts. He never stooped to take notice of any pettiness or personal acrimony. To us, who separated from him, he always extended a helping hand, whenever the prayer for help went up to him. It is a fact of Brahma history, that even after the schism, whenever the progressive Brahmos approached him, seeking his help in carrying on their work, they found him ever ready to respond to the call. The following

incidents that came under my personal observation are instances in point.

After the return of Brahmananda Keshub Chunder Sen from England in 1870, the Maharshi accorded to him a warm welcome, and the good old days of friendship between the two leaders seemed to return. The old sage was invited by the progressive leader to come and occupy the pulpit of the Brahmo Mandir one day, during the anniversary festival of the Samaj in 1871. Devendra Nath came, but the sermon he preached gave some offence to the younger party. In that sermon he referred to the pro-Christian tendencies of Keshub Chunder Sen and described it as *Khrishta-bibhishika*, or the "bogey of Christianity" in the way of the Brahmo Samaj. The allusion to him in that way hurt Mr. Sen, and we, his young associates, also felt for him. A letter of protest was forthwith drafted and sent to the old leader, pointing out to him that his preaching was in violation of one of the fundamental principles laid down at the foundation of the Mandir. I was one of the signatories. What must have been my

surprise to find that, when after two or three days, I approached the old father as usual, he received me with a smile, and said,—“you have sent that letter of protest but when you invited me to conduct service, you ought to have been prepared to listen to what I considered to be the best and fittest thing for that occasion. If you invite me again I shall perhaps say the very same thing. There is that danger in your way, you are making too much of Christ and Christianity.”

Some time after this came the anniversary celebration of the Sinduriapati Family Brahma Samaj. I was its minister and I had asked the Maharshi to conduct the evening service; to which he had responded with pleasure. At the appointed hour he came and occupied the pulpit. There was a large gathering attracted by his name. Mr. Sen also was there, though occupying one of the back seats. After the service was over I was leading the Maharshi to his carriage at the door; the assembled crowd had made way for him to pass by standing aside in two rows on two sides. In passing

through the way thus made I noticed Mr. Sen standing aside in one of the rows and I drew the old father's attention to him. Whereupon he threw one of his arms round Mr. Sen's neck, drew him to himself and exclaimed.—“Keshub, Keshub, were you preset here, why did you not sit by me and before me? Your very look would have inspired me. Not personally knowing many of the men present, I was rather out of my element all the time. Your presence and nearness would have strengthened me.” We wondered how dear and near to his mind Mr. Sen was even after so much party struggle. And it is a well-known fact how the old leader caused himself to be carried to the bedside of Mr. Sen during the latter's dying moments, and bent over him to give him his final blessings. That he always occupied a position of lofty magnanimity towards those who had separated from him, will be further shown by the following incident.

When the project of building a Mandir for the newly established Sadharan Brähmo Samaj was in our hands, a few represen-

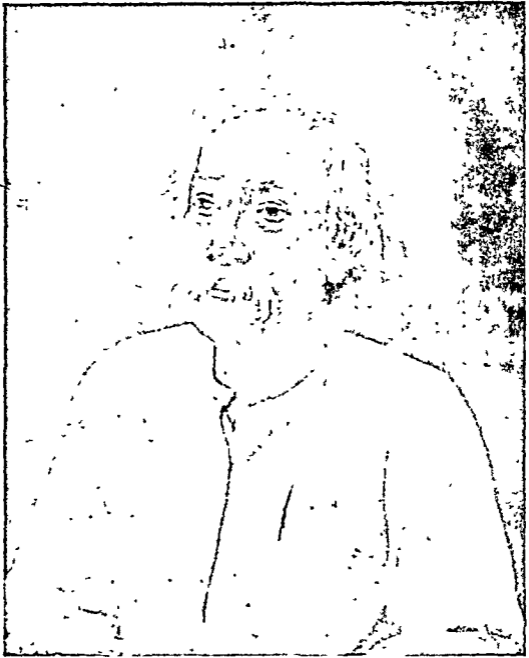
tative men from amongst us, including my late friends Ananda Mohan Bose and Durgamohan Das, sent to the Maharshi a written application for pecuniary aid. Upon my return to town after a missionary tour I learnt that after the receipt of that application the old father had been making enquiries about the trustees and the trust-deed, and about the price of the land to be purchased, &c. I found my friends despairing of anything like a large donation from him. Within a few days after my return I went to see him. I found Babu Rajnarain Bose seated there. Talk about the Persian saint poet Hafiz and Baba Nanak was going on. My advent apparently added to the interest of the talk, for the Maharshi's countenance glowed with emotion as he expounded the spiritual truths to be derived from their sayings. At last snatching a brief pause in the conversation I asked him about the fate of our petition for pecuniary aid, in the matter of our Mandir. The Maharshi, who was always full of pleasant humour, looked at me, smiled and said, in the language of the law-courts, "The petition

has been filed with the *nalhi*" or applications awaiting consideration. Again the talk went on, in the midst of which he rose from his seat, caught hold of my hand and led me into a side-room where he treated me to a hearty luncheon, himself serving at the table with his own hands. After our return to his sitting room, when I stood up to go, he stopped me by saying, "I am giving my *rai* or decision upon your petition."—I stopped; he wrote out a cheque for Rs. 7,000, and presented it to me, saying in English—"This is my unconditional gift," When the *Sadhanashram*, of which I am the the Superintendent, was founded, the Maharshi called me to his presence one day to hear about its aims and purposes. I gave him every information that he wanted. On that day I had no idea of asking for any pecuniary aid from him. I felt gratified that he had condescended to take notice of our endeavours. But to my surprise when I was about to leave he stopped me and said, "Stop, take some pecuniary aid from me." And he gave me a good round sum as his contribution. Such was his treatment

of even those who had separated from him and all whose ways he could not entirely like.

He was calm and unruffled in the midst of the sorest of trials. The following incident was reported to me by Pundit Priya Nath Sastri, his personal attendant, soon after that event happened. At the time of the death of his third son Hemendranath Tagore, the Maharshi was temporarily residing at Chinsurah. When the news of the former's serious illness was taken to him from Calcutta, he became very anxious, and began to send one or other of his attendants both in the morning and the evening to keep himself informed of the former's exact condition and also of the arrangements made for his treatment and nursing. The day following the night on which Hemendranath had died, Pundit Priya Nath Sastri was sent to Calcutta in the morning for the usual report. The latter came and was apprised of the fatal end. He returned to Chinsurah with that intelligence and naturally hesitated to approach the old sage to communicate it to him. He

loitered and loitered in his own room, not venturing out of it to show himself to his master. In the afternoon the Maharshi came out of his own room to have a stroll on the veranda, as was his usual habit; but his mind was impatient to hear about Hemendra. He enquired of the servants whether Priya Nath Sastri had returned or not. At this stage Pundit Sastri issued out of his room, and communicated to him the fatal news. The sage stopped for a minute from his walk and made this only observation, "Strange are the ways of Providence that I should be thus spared and Hemendra should go. He leaves his own burden to me"; meaning thereby the cares of Hemendra's family. After this he began to walk as before, without the slightest sign of sorrow or depression. In him there was the true embodiment of the truth contained in that passage of the Gita where it is said—"A true Muni is he, who is not buffeted by sorrows and sufferings, who does not covet pleasures, and in whom there is no attachment, fear or anger." Devendra Nath was a true *muni* in that respect.



DR. MAHENDRALAL SARCAR.

VI

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF DR. MAHENDRALAL SIRCAR.

IN the year 1868 we, the young men of Bengal, were looking up to Dr. Mahendralal Sircar as one of the rising stars of the Province. Nay, as something more than a rising star. Dr. Berigny, the celebrated Homœopathic practitioner of the town, when bidding farewell to his Calcutta friends, at about that time, closed his speech with the words—"it is time for the *moon* to set, for the *sun* is on the horizon," meaning thereby the rising genius of Dr. Mahendralal Sircar. Dr. Sircar was regarded by his medical friend as the rising sun.

To us young men his example was noble and inspiring. We admired him for two reasons. First, sprung from a comparatively humble origin, he rose by self-exertion to occupy one of the highest places in Indian society. He was an ideal to us of

self-help. Secondly, his great love of truth and the courage with which he had given his adherence to the cause of homœopathy in the face of strong opposition and bitter persecution, was also an ennobling sight to us. The story is this. As the second or third M. D. of the Calcutta Medical College, and as a successful medical practitioner of the town, he belonged to a Medical Association, started by some professors of the College and by some other noted medical men. Dr. Sircar was working with the Association, as one of its distinguished members, and I think, as one of its office-bearers. Then there came a struggle. Under the influence of the late Babu Rajendra Dutt of the Wellington Square Dutt Family, a well-known Homœopath of the time, Dr. Sircar began to study Homœopathy and became a convert to it. He knew that the cause of Homœopathy was extremely unpopular amongst his medical friends of the town ; yet his love of truth impelled him to place the argument in its favour before his brother-physicians, at a meeting of the Association. That was a memorable day. As the

reading of his paper went on, and the claims of Hänneman were set forth, in the terms of a loving and admiring disciple, his brother-physicians, assembled at the meeting, were mightily shaken, till one of them sprang to his feet, and exclaimed—"well, doctor, one word more and you shall be turned out of this hall." Then there came the spirit of Martin Luther upon Dr. Sircar, who squared his breast and calmly replied, "even if I be turned out, yet I must tell the truth."

After this he was boycotted by his profession, his practice fell and he was exposed to taunts and ridicule. But nothing daunted, he went on seeking and 'advocating truth regardless of consequences.

The story of this manly independence raised Dr. Sircar in the eyes of us, young men, immensely. We became his silent admirers. Added to this were his simple habits and his unostentatious ways. That also was a subject of talk amongst us. It was in the midst of that personal regard and admiration, that circumstances arose to draw me into personal intercourse with

him ; and those circumstances I am going to relate.

I was introduced to Dr. Sircar in the year 1868. I have already referred, in my Vidyasagar article, to the serious illness of a re-married widow, the wife of a friend of mine. When she became seriously ill, Pundit Vidyasagar gave me a note of introduction to Dr. Sircar with a request to give her his medical aid. He at once took up the case, though without any hope of remuneration and began to pay regular visits. By his free and open manners he won our confidence and respect. I began to visit him morning and evening, for reporting the progress of the case to him. At last he lost all hope of her recovery ; though for a day or two he kept it a secret from us. The day before her death I went to him at about nine or ten in the evening. But in the hurry and anxiety of the moment, I had forgotten to take a phial with me to bring the medicine in it. When Dr. Sircar asked for the phial to drop in the medicine, I was put in a very awkward position. A search was then made in his own house for a clean phial like the one

needed. Sadly enough it was not forthcoming. At last I went out in search of some shop or dispensary where I could purchase one. In this way much valuable time was lost. When I returned after a long while, then took place the following conversation between us.

Dr. Sircar—Ah! that shows that the case is fatal, she cannot live; otherwise why should you forget to bring a phial which you usually do; and why should so much time be wasted for procuring one, when every moment was so precious!

Myself—Sir, if you say that, what are we to say to the common people who believe in fate? Such words from a physician are very discouraging.

Dr. Sircar—I find it from my pretty long experience as a medical practitioner, that some other Power rules over life and our efforts are only throwing stones in the dark. Who can save one for whom death is *certain*?

Myself—Why then, Sir! keep up your medical practice? Tell people, to resign themselves to fate and keep quiet.

Dr. Sircar—Don't you see, we are always in the dark as to the final result of the disease before us ; but being in the dark it is all the more our duty to strive our best to ward off the danger, all the time fully conscious, however, that life and death rest in some other Hand. Our efforts are of no avail in those cases where death is certain. We struggle, we think, we take care, but, don't you see, the ultimate result is in other hands than our own.

The conversation closed here that evening, for the mournful news of the fatal character of the malady of my friend's wife filled my heart with sadness and I longed to run home to see how she was. She died the next morning and I carried the sad news to Dr. Sircar, who sincerely sympathised with us in our sorrow.

After this I removed to Bhowanipore in the Southern Suburbs, to spend a few months in the house of Babu Mahesh Chandra Chaudhuri, my guardian and benefactor, during many years of my school-days. He was a pleader of the High Court, esteemed by all who knew him, for his

high moral character, and the loftiness of his principles. Dr. Sircar's high character and reputation drew Babu Mahesh Chandra to him and the former was appointed the family physician of that house. Whilst residing there I had an occasion of meeting Dr. Sircar for the second time in the beginning of 1869.

It happened in this way. The very hard work I went through in connection with the University Examination of 1868 told very seriously upon my constitution and gave rise to a peculiar malady which obliged me to take rest for some time. Accordingly, after the death of my friend's wife, and the breaking up of our joint family at Calcutta, I went to Bhowanipore to spend a few months with my friends the Chaudhuries. While there, one day Dr. Sircar called to see a patient. My fellow-lodgers pressed me to go to him and submit my case to his treatment. I did not tell them that I was personally known to him through Pandit Vidyasagar's introduction, but only said that I did not like to trouble him with my case, when his mind was engaged in another

duty. But my friends dragged me by force before him, with the introduction—"Here Sir, here is a poor Brahmin boy living in our house whom we all love. He is suffering from a strange malady. Will you kindly see him?" Dr. Sircar looked at my face, smiled and said—"I know that Brahmin boy; what is the matter with him?" Then he asked me to write out my whole case, clearly stating its probable causes, and its leading symptoms and present it to him the next day, when he would call again. But that very day something very painful happened. When he was examining the patient for whom he had come, amongst others Babu Girish Chandra, the younger brother of Babu Mahesh Chandra, who had come to Calcutta from his village home, was also present. Now Babu Girish Chandra was a man of an inquisitive temperament. Whenever anything happened, or some statement was made before him, to rouse his curiosity, it was his nature not to rest, until by question after question, he could know the whole thing about it. In accordance with this well-known tempera-

ment of his, Babu Girish Chandra committed the great mistake of asking Dr. Sircar, when the latter was writing his prescription, about the medicines he was prescribing. This naturally irritated Dr. Sircar, who was by nature a little irritable. Then followed the undermentioned conversation :—

Dr. Sircar—Who are you, Sir ? Why do you ask such an impertinent question ?

Then he went on repeating big Latin names of the medicines he had prescribed. After which he turned to Babu Girish Chandra and asked, “have you understood anything ?”

Babu Girish Chandra—How could I ? I do not know Latin.

Dr. Sircar—Are you a medical student ? Do you know any thing of medicine ?

Babu Girish Chandra—No, Sir.

Dr. Sircar—(With great impatience) What a fool you must be then to bother a doctor with such questions.

Then he left. But his outburst of temper produced a shock in the minds of us, the youngsters ; for next after Babu Mahesh Chandra we all loved and revered his

brother, for the excellence of his moral character. We talked over the rough manners of the great doctor, and our fellow-lodgers in their comic way ascribed them to the mean origin from which he had sprung.

To me all that frivolous talk was unbearable ; but mentally I could not hide from myself the great doctor's defective manners.

The next day when Dr. Sircar called again, I presented to him the promised statement of my case written in English, with a Bengali letter, in which I had strongly censured him for his ill manners towards Babu Mahesh Chandra's beloved brother. In that letter I freely expressed my admiration of what Dr. Sircar had done and suffered for truth, and also of the qualities of his character, but made no secret of my contempt for the roughness of his manners, and preached quite a sermon to him about the responsibilities of great leaders. My sermon was couched in very plain and rough language. The letter was written and delivered in a moment of unguarded impulse. The impropriety of a

youth like myself reading a lesson to a great man like the doctor, did not occur to me during that moment ; but as soon as it was delivered and the doctor left, I began to reflect and a sense of shame came upon me. Then I began to realize my critical position. A poor Brahmin youth, dependent on others, and seeking the unpaid attention of that very doctor, yet daring to censure him ! Indeed I began to chastize myself for having taken such a course, and began hourly to expect a message from Dr. Sircar to Babu Mahesh Chandra about the improper conduct of the Brahmin youth, leading to my final expulsion from that house.

How great must have been my surprise, therefore, to find Dr. Sircar turning up unasked after two days and wanting to see the boy Sivanath Bhattacharya. I was engaged in my studies in another part of the house at the time. Dr. Sircar came to the drawing room and wanted to see me. The people of the house were surprised to find him coming for *me alone*, and eagerly wanting to see me. Someone said to him—“so, after all we see that *pagal* (madcap) that

has interested you and has made you take the trouble of coming again."

Dr. Sircar—Would to God there were many more *pagals* in Bengal; please call him, I want to speak to him.

When the news was brought to me that the great doctor wanted to see me, I felt as if my last hour under that roof had come; and a torrent of abuse by all was waiting for me. With such dark forebodings I went to the door of the drawing-room. When lo! Dr. Sircar rose from his seat on the other side of the table and extended his right hand to shake hands with me; saying—"Very glad to receive your English statement and very thankful for your Bengali letter." At this point I made a faltering attempt to offer an apology, but he would not listen to an apology, saying, "No use of apology, my friend! I have come to take you in my carriage to my house. Are you free to accompany me? I want to have a conversation with you on the subject of your letter, which we shall have in the carriage."

Within a few minutes I was dressed and

ready and we started together in his carriage, to the wonder of all. In the carriage I plainly told him that I too considered Babu Girish Chandra's question as impertinent, but the doctor's manner was certainly rough, and inasmuch as I loved Girish Babu and truly respected him, I was deeply pained to hear the adverse criticisms of my fellow-lodgers. The doctor told me that he hated the meanness of his fellow-countrymen, who would freely give large fees to European physicians of lower standing, but would grudge to pay to him and to other native Indian physicians even their legitimate fees. At times he purposely treated such men with undisguised contempt. That habit might have soured his temper. That was perhaps the cause of the popular notion that his manners were rough. Besides the question of Babu Girish Chandra, at such a moment, seemed to him unbearable. His manner was certainly rough, which he regretted, and he had let Girish Babu know that he did so.

He took me to his house, which I left a few minutes later, with a sense of wonder

at the genuine goodness of the man who could thus behave towards a youth, who certainly went beyond his limits in taking him to task in this way. That showed his love of plain dealing. That incident drew me closer to Dr. Sircar and he too began to treat me with great affection.

After this I joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1869 and in 1870 I came to reside in the neighbourhood of Dr. Sircar, when I met him very often. His company and conversation had so great a charm for us, that not only I but many others, would be daily drawn into that company, and something like an informal club used to sit around him morning and evening. Whenever I went I found him sitting in the midst of heaps of books and talking to assembled friends on topics of general interest. As far as my knowledge goes, two other informal clubs used to assemble at that time in Calcutta ; one in the house of Babu Kristo-Das Pal, the editor of the *Hindoo Patriot*, and the second in the house of Keshub Chunder Sen, where we, members of the Brahmo Samaj, were the daily visitors. Of

these clubs, the one sitting in the house of Dr. Sircar was the most useful from an educational point of view. His very talk was an education ; his information was so vast, and his love of culture was so great. Indeed, his love of culture was very great. He had an ardent love for knowledge. To build up a library was a passion with him. To have a look at his library, was in itself a great pleasure for me, which took me often there. He would take me round to see his books and admire them.

During the course of my pretty long experience I have found very few men who had that love of culture. It was almost a passion with him. He was inordinately fond of books and and has left behind him a splendid library, the like of which, perhaps with the exception of Dr. Ashutosh Mukerjee's library, cannot be seen in Calcutta. In this he resembled the late Pundit Isvar Chandrà Vidyasagar.

To me Dr. Sircar was specially attached, and helpful. One incident that occurred during this time I specially remember. An infant daughter of mine, who was prema-

turely born, became very ill during this period and I placed her under the great doctor's treatment, which he gladly undertook without any hope of remuneration. I often called on him for consultation. One day finding me very anxious about the child, the doctor said :—"You believe so earnestly in prayer, my dear fellow, why don't you pray to God, once for all, that you may not get any more children." Of course that remark made everybody present there laugh heartily. I asked—"Am I causing you too much trouble, Sir ?"

Dr. Sircar—It is no trouble to me. I seldom call at your house, I give my directions from home ; but the manner in which you seem to be anxious about that child causes me pain.

Myself—All our efforts to save the child from suffering seem to be of no avail ; that makes me anxious.

Dr. Sircar—Well, after having done your *best* you should keep your mind at rest and leave the final issues to Providence. I have told you often and often that the ultimate issues rest in other hands. Of what good

is our trust in God if it does not give us rest.

I loved Dr. Sircar, first, for his love of knowledge, for the atmosphere of culture and of high aims in the midst of which he seemed to live ; where one breathed, as it were, free and pure air in his company and forgot all mean and little things. His very talk was elevating. He raised his listeners to a high level of intellectuality. What a contrast did that present to the ordinary conversation of the town prevalent at the time. Secondly, I liked him as I have already said, for his simple and unostentatious ways of living. He wore Taltolah slippers always ; whether visiting his patients or attending public meetings. The Calcutta public do not remember having seen him with boots or shoes, which he disliked as a medical man, owing to the pressure that they inevitably put on the big toes of men's feet, and thereby partly injure their health. It is said he imbibed this prejudice against boots and shoes from another physician of the town, the late Dr. Durga Charan Banerjea, the father of my friend Babu Surendranath

Banerjea. Not only in the matter of the slippers but also in his modes of diet and clothing Dr. Sircar was extremely simple. He more resembled an old poor Brahmin in these respects than a successful medical practitioner of the town. In food and drink he was moderate, temperate and even abstemious, spending all the money that he could save thereby in purchasing books. Thirdly, I admired him for his honest and straight-forward dealings with others, his fearless advocacy of truth, his manly independence, his fidelity to his convictions, and his openhearted disposition not to mince matters. I have seldom met another person in whom these qualities were so prominent. He would at times warmly express his opinions about the conduct of others, but he was above meanness or malice. He would accept the adverse criticisms of others as matters of course, and would be mainly concerned with his conviction and his duty. He would scoff at the threats of others, but would carry no poisoned barbs by way of vengeance. For these traits I highly esteemed him, and often sought his company.

Sometimes I found him alone in his study. Then he would open his mind to me, on subjects of religious and social reform, in which he knew I was deeply interested. The conversation would at times assume the character of a heated discussion. One such discussion I still remember. That day the conversation turned upon the need of a religious organisation like the Brahmo Samaj. Dr. Sircar denied its necessity and I upheld the need of a Church, to feed and keep up the spiritual lives of men. Let me report in brief the contention on both sides.

Dr. Sircar—Look here, the faith in a Supreme Being is natural and instinctive in the mind of man. If men are morally pure, and if their minds are truly enlightened, they will naturally look up to the Great Being who rules over life. I see no need for the organisation of a religious body, with temples for worship, or orders for public or private service. They are rather harmful; for they call forth sectarian conflict, divide man from man and disturb our domestic and social relations.

Myself—Granting that the religious

faculty is natural and instinctive in man, is it not necessary to take steps for its due cultivation? What do you generally do with regard to other natural endowments of human nature? Is not love of music natural? Do not all races compose their babies into sleep by singing lullabies? Yet you appoint musical teachers, open musical schools, get up concerts to foster and develop that faculty. Is not love of beauty equally natural? The baby in the cradle would stretch forth its little arms to catch at a flower presented to its view? Yet you have your artists and painters, your picture galleries, your art-schools for its culture. Coming to close quarters, is not desire for knowledge, instinctive and natural in the mind of man? Yet you have opened educational institutions, your universities, your lecture halls for its due cultivation. And you, Sir, are busily thinking of founding a Science Association. Then am I to understand that you are for the due cultivation of all other natural endowments of human nature, excepting this one, the most important of them all? And that this is.

most important and fundamental needs no words of mine to prove. With regard to it, can we not say, take care of this thing first and all other things of human life shall be taken care of? Then as to the generation of a sectarian conflict, why should you single out religion alone? Do you find less sectarianism even in the practice of your medical profession? Are your old allopathic friends less sectarian towards your homœopathy? Have they subjected you to less persecution than what my orthodox Hindu relations have meted out to me? Narrowness and sectarianism are fruits of human ignorance. Give men more knowledge, teach them to think liberally and they will be more tolerant. Truth we must always abide by regardless of fear or favour.

At this stage Dr. Sircar suddenly stopped, saying—"Oh! I see I must think over these questions more fully before I engage in discussion with others. Well, let us stop to-day, we shall take up the question some other time."

I removed from his neighbourhood soon after and had to leave Calcutta for a few

years. Consequently I lost touch with him for sometime and that discussion was never resumed.

I have already referred in my Ananda Mahan Bose article to my serious illness in 1877. Then the aid of the great doctor was once more sought. He promptly responded to the call and fought hard to restore me to health. He gave his valuable services freely and gratuitously and did for me what he would have done for a member of his family. I stuck to him in the face of much opposition from my revered mother and many of my personal friends, who had not much faith in homoeopathy, and I recovered under his treatment.

Again, in subsequent years came an occasion for showing his great love for and his goodness towards me. In the year 1881 or 1882 one of my daughters fell ill. It proved to be typhoid fever of a very bad type, with attendant fits. Friends advised me to try allopathy; but from the beginning I decided to try homoeopathy. A medical friend, who was practising homoeopathy at that time, and was a personal friend of

our family, was placed in charge of the case. At first the case did not seem to be so very serious, but its serious character was soon revealed, when Dr. Sircar was called in as a consulting physician. He promptly responded to the call and took up the case. He began to call at my house morning and evening every day, and began to spend nearly an hour each time, in watching the patient, in taking notes, in poring over his books. So great was his interest in the case that he would not allow a single morning to pass without calling. One morning he asked my Brahma medical friend to call at a certain hour in the evening and be ready with notes for him. My friend expressed some doubts as to his being able to accede to that request, because he had other engagements. Whereupon Dr. Sircar said,—“If being a Brahma you say that, what right have you to expect that I should call at the usual time. No, you must come, the case is serious, and our constant attendance and utmost attention are necessary. Leave all other work and do come.” So my friend had to withdraw his objection.

My daughter came round under his treatment.

Once more I had to seek his aid. I think it was in 1891, that I went out to the Madras Presidency on a mission tour. I fell ill at Coconada, a sea-port town in the Godavery District. I was unaccompanied by any friend or servant and I fell seriously ill amongst men whose friendship I had recently made. They tried their best to save me, but there was lack of good doctors in the town. In that extremity, I insisted upon calling in a Eurasian gentleman, who was an amateur homœopath. I caused this doctor to wire my symptoms to Dr. Sircar in Calcutta ; and he kindly took up my case and began to treat me by telegrams. The friend in Calcutta who took the first telegram to Dr. Sircar informed me afterwards, that when the latter read the symptoms, as related in the telegram, drops of tear were seen rolling down his cheeks and he exclaimed—"Alas ! he is dying amongst strangers, where we cannot see him."

When I recovered and returned to Calcutta, I made it my first duty to go and

see him. He embraced me warmly and said that he thanked God that I was once more amongst my friends.

During subsequent years I paid him visits in his library from time to time and had conversation with him on various public questions. Once or twice on behalf of the Brahmo Samaj, we persuaded him to come and preside at the Ram Mohun Roy meetings annually held on the 27th of September. He was a great admirer of the Rajah and had collected some relics of him which he kept with great care. His sympathy and reverence for the great reformer were due to the fact of his having inaugurated religious and social reforms. Dr. Sircar hated from the bottom of his heart all retrogressive movements. He publicly taunted those educated men who advocated progress in science, literature and politics, but propounded retrogressive views in matters of social life.

Whilst speaking of this forward look of Dr. Sircar I remember a little incident which happened at a public meeting in the Albert Hall of Calcutta. On that occasion

a Western lady was the speaker. I do not distinctly remember whether Dr. Sircar occupied the chair or not; but he was present. In her lecture the lady said something in defence of idolatry or of her Kali-worship, which took Dr. Sircar by surprise so much that he rose after her speech and said some earnest words which thrilled every one present. The opening words I distinctly remember. "Have I lived so long, in the world," said the doctor, "to find an English-woman coming from the West, and defending the idolatry of our land? Certainly we have fallen on strange times." He went on in that strain, and thundered out his vehement declamation of all retrogressive ideas.

One or two instances of Dr. Sircar's humour seem to be worth recording. I have already spoken of the serious illness of one of my daughters, in 1881 or 1882. I was then living in the neighbourhood of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj *Mandir*. The first time he called, and met me, he smiled and observed—"Haven't you heard that English adage,—"nearer to 'church farther from God" ? What have you done ? Why have

Myself—But he did not crave for, nor did he encourage it. People thrust it upon him. He said he could not interfere with other men's liberty.

Towards the end of his life I met Dr. Sircar occasionally. His health gradually went down, and he passed away, leaving behind him a memory that will be long cherished as that of one of the makers of modern Bengal.

